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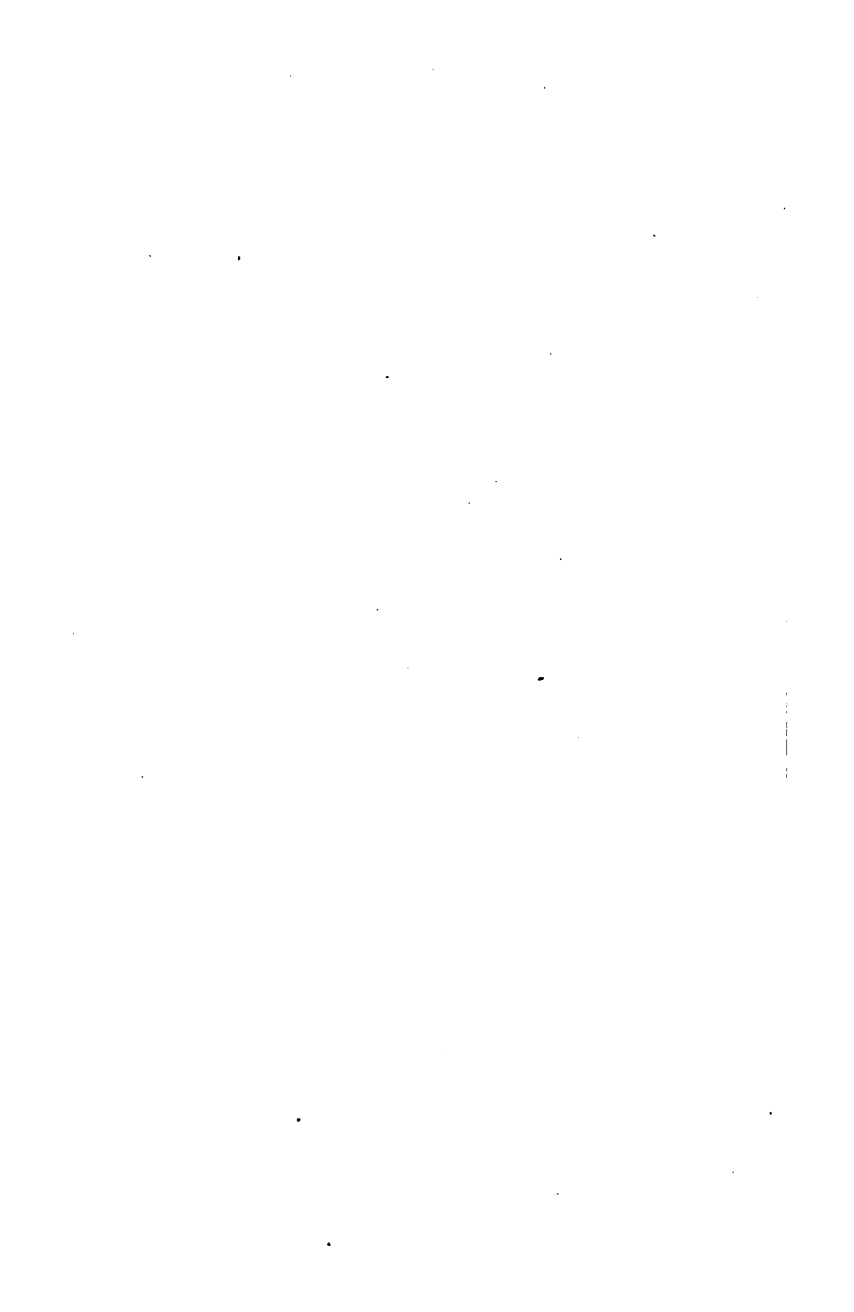
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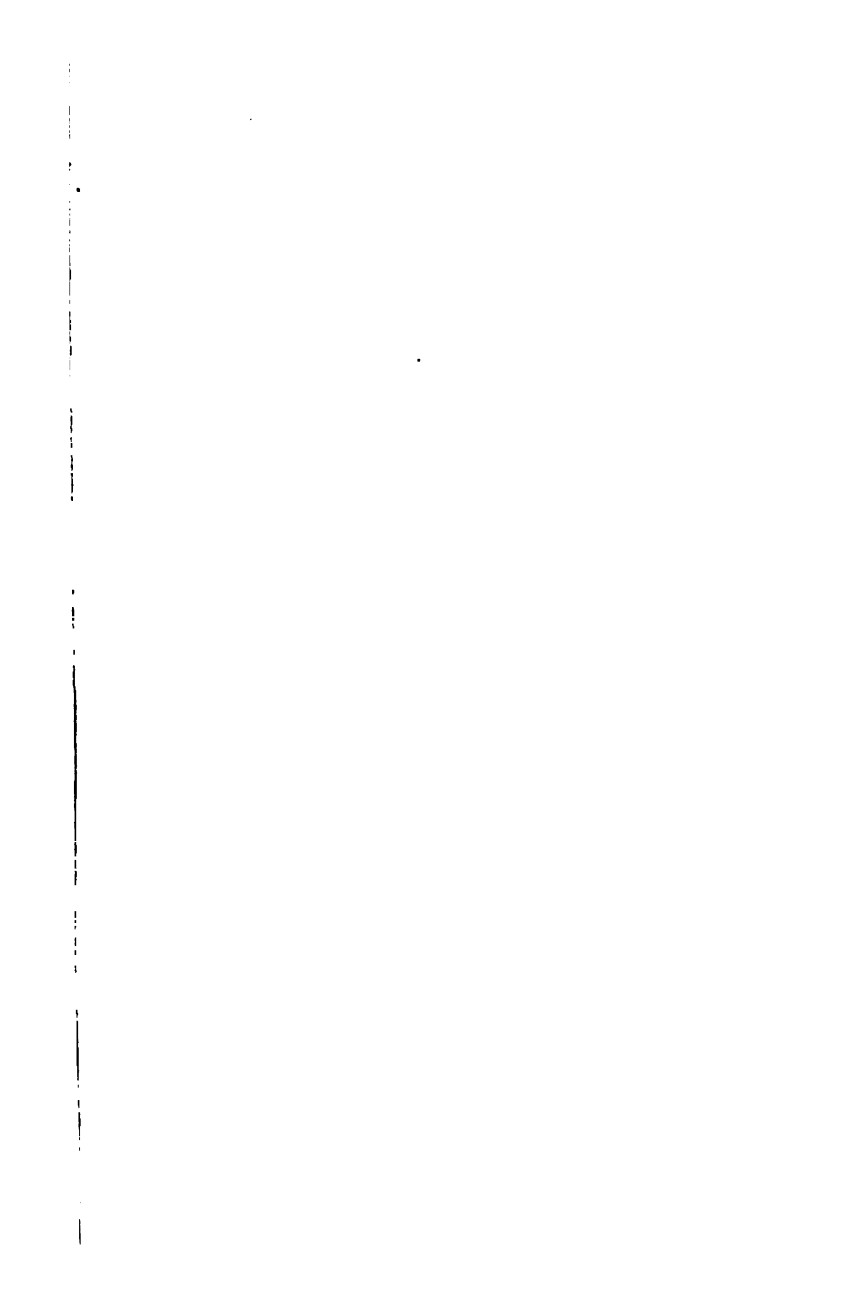


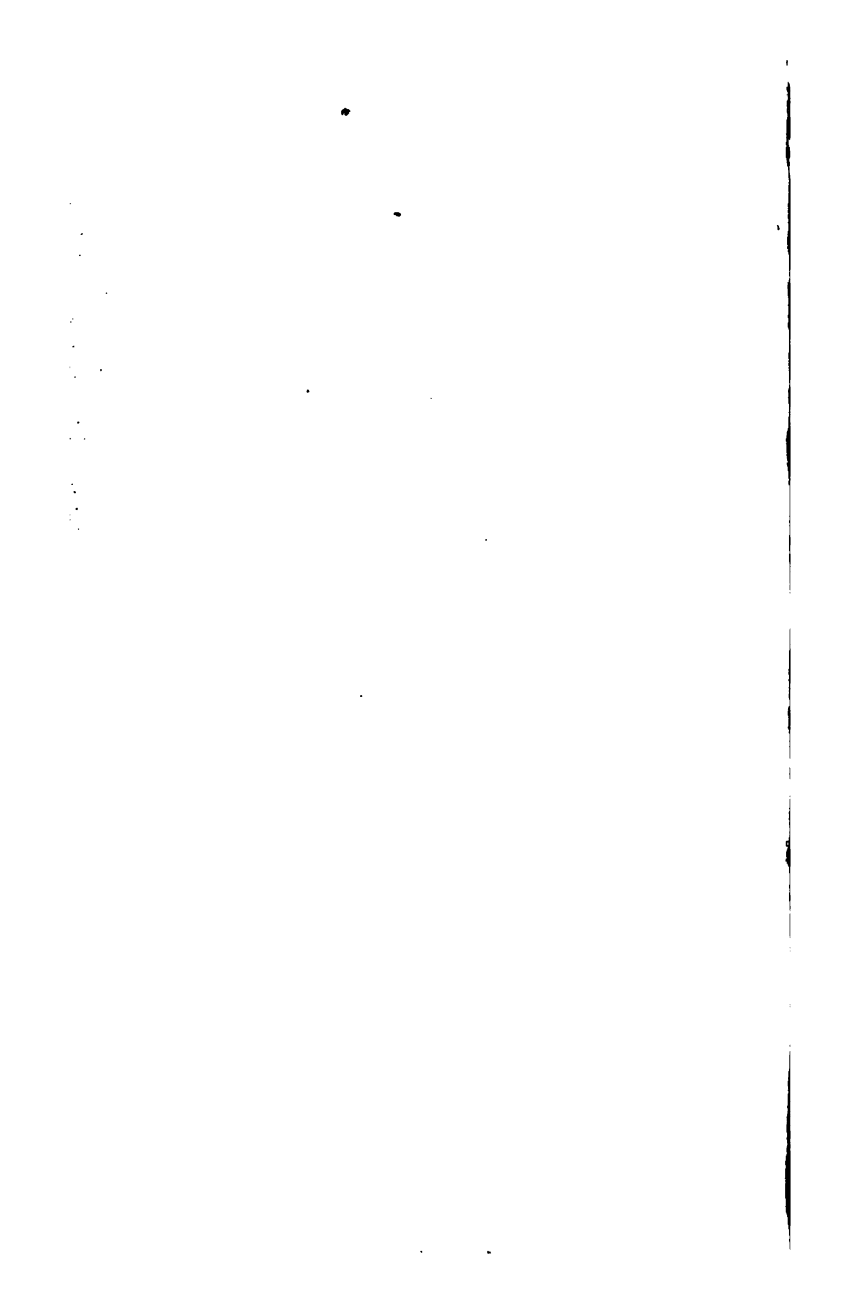
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FROM

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RECOLLECTIONS

OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

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OF

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PREFACE.

PREFACES are either explanatory or apologetical : and, in the present instance, after what has been said in the first chapter of the following Memoir, it is, perhaps, hardly needful to write one. However, a few lines may be useful, in order to apprise the reader more distinctly of the Author's principal aim in this little volume, that he may not be blamed for the non-execution of that which he never intended.

In perusing autobiographical reminiscences, of which so many specimens have appeared during the last twenty-five years, it had often occurred to him how much

good might have accrued, if the authors had said more of the distinguished individuals whom they incidentally knew, and less about themselves ; whereas, on the contrary, their notions of others are usually given in the most vague and careless manner, and the staple commodity is supplied by mere egotism.

This remark will appear trite, but the intention with which it is made may not be so obvious. It is, surely, of little service to record such anecdotes as that Ben Jonson drank every night a large portion of old sack, and slept long in the morning ; or that Dryden sat in a particular arm-chair at Button's, which was reserved for him. A volume of such disjointed memoranda, even about the most eminent person, may prove tiresome enough, and entirely fail to convey to the reader any vivid and lasting impression of the individual to whom they refer.

But every rational observer who had, for a series of years, been in the habit of meeting frequently with Ben Jonson, or John Dryden, must surely have formed to himself clear ideas of their leading characteristics and peculiarities, such as, if adequately expressed in narrative shape, from the beginning of that intercourse to its close, might present a striking portrait. Nor is it indispensable that much talent should exist on the part of the writer, if he can but faithfully revive those impressions on which his own conclusions respecting his hero were founded. A tract, presenting the author's best notions of Shakespeare's character, principles, and habits, written by an intimate acquaintance, would be inestimable, even though that acquaintance had himself never been able to compose a single sonnet. Yet its interest would depend on a distinct and just conception of character, to the developement of

which every anecdote is merely accessory, like details of still life introduced into a picture, which help to bring out the portrait.

On this ground alone (namely, just appreciation of character), the merits of the following sketch, if it has any, must rest. In the mere statement of events and dates (which, comparatively, are unimportant), there may be errors, which the writer, up to the present hour, had no opportunity to correct, if he had been solicitous to do so. But, instead of feeling anxious on that account, some anachronisms were, in one chapter, *purposely* introduced for the sake of promoting the author's wish (at the outset) to remain anonymous.

That wish arose, on the present, as on many other occasions, from the conviction how unequal his production was to what, under less unprosperous circumstances, it might have been made. Writing wholly

without access to books, which might have assisted recollection, and not being able, for the last three years, to command even a single day which he could devote, uninterruptedly, to literary employment, he feels that these disadvantages ought to be mentioned as some apology for defects and inaccuracies. The work, however, as it appeared in "Fraser's Magazine," met with a favourable reception; and he may trust, that it affords a tolerably correct, though feeble tracing of an illustrious character—a rude crayon likeness of a great and good man, whose path in life, notwithstanding all his fame and apparent prosperity, had its allotment of ruggedness and briars, as almost invariably happens to an individual who moves *alone* in the world. If the word "*alone*" seems enigmatical, let any surviving friend of Sir Walter Scott ask himself the question, whether he knows or believes he

could discover any mortal in whom he might place the same degree of reliance for talent, firmness, integrity, and benevolence, which he could have reposed in the author of "Waverley;" or whether he recollects any one intimately connected with Sir Walter, whose mind and habits were exactly congenial? But the Preface must close, otherwise another volume might, unconsciously, be written.

A few letters to the Author, selected from a long series, would have accompanied the work, but are regarded as the property of Sir Walter's literary executors. If not required for insertion in his *Life*, they may form part of another edition.

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RECOLLECTIONS
OF
SIR WALTER SCOTT.

SECTION I.
HIS BOYHOOD AND YOUTH.

CHAPTER I.
INTRODUCTORY NOTICES, AND APOLOGY.

It is a remarkable fact, that up to the present date, scarcely any Memoirs of Sir Walter Scott have been published, except those which shortly after his lamented death were circulated in some of the weekly journals.

Yet for this there are many reasons. The silence, however, is not principally imputable to the expectations formed of his literary life, to be published by a highly distinguished relative and

2 INTRODUCTORY NOTICES, AND APOLOGY.

friend ; for that circumstance alone would not prevent, and *ought not* to prevent, others from recording, out of their own recollections and experience, whatever tends to illustrate a character, which, the more it is developed, will be the more admired and respected. Had *every one* admitted to friendly intercourse with the great men of former ages (with Shakspeare, for example, or Sir Philip Sidney) committed to writing such characteristic *traits* and anecdotes as they were able to remember, how interesting and valuable would those *memoranda* have been to future generations !

In regard to moral utility, the portrait-painter and sculptor have little pretensions, when compared with those of a faithful biographer, though their productions are highly esteemed. But if the features of a great and good man have been perpetuated by Lawrence or Chantrey, will this destroy the interest attached to his likeness, when rapidly and *faithfully* sketched by the hand even of a nameless artist, however humble and obscure ? If a tomb were erected by his relatives in Dryburgh Abbey, or if the nation combined in raising public monuments to his memory, should this prevent the grief-stricken villager from wending his way unseen and unknown, to strew flowers on the grave of a departed friend and benefactor ?

Whoever attempts the biographical portrait of Scott must be, in one sense of the word, his eulogist, or he will exhibit no likeness; but from this it does not follow, that information drawn from different quarters will be wanting in variety. Moreover, such recollections committed to writing may be considered a pious tribute to the memory of the dead; while for the public they assist in diffusing that inestimable knowledge which is derived from the contemplation of illustrious examples.

But, as above said, there are many reasons why so little has yet been published on the subject. In weekly and other journals appeared summary views of the principal events in Sir Walter's life, which, when accurately given, another writer can only repeat without alteration. He was the indefatigable *creator* of romance; but *his own existence* passed quietly, almost monotonously, only varying in scene from Edinburgh and the Court of Session, which occupied seven months in the year, to the beloved mountains of Ettrick and Yarrow for the rest. There were no glaring eccentricities to commemorate, nor marvellous stories, like those which Byron, in his wanderings, seemed to delight in having circulated, at the expense of his own better fame. There *are*, however, marvels and eccentricities of a very different class, by recording which, the biography

4 INTRODUCTORY NOTICES, AND APOLOGY.

of an eminent author and exemplary man may be rendered more instructive, if not more entertaining, than even that of a historical hero exposed to "moving accidents by flood and field:" but it can be so treated only by individuals who have been honoured with his acquaintance; and of those who really knew and *appreciated* the character of Scott, there are, perhaps, few who can subdue their own feelings for his loss in such manner, that they may calmly write of him as numbered among the dead. Besides, those who by friendly intercourse became best qualified for the task, are not unlikely to remain the longest mute, from the mere conviction how inadequate, in this instance, must be the efforts of a biographical delineator, when contrasted with the merits of his original.

To such difficulties and objections no one can be more thoroughly awake than the writer of these pages; yet he has, notwithstanding, been induced to act on the suggestions of a highly valued literary friend, who proposed that he should commit to writing whatever recollections occurred to him respecting the life of Sir Walter Scott, from early life to its close. In a remote situation, without a single English book to assist him, he has begun this task; and is induced to continue it by reflecting that in the Memoirs expected from Mr. Lockhart, it would be impossible to include even one-twentieth part of

the letters, conversations, anecdotes, journals, and memoranda of all sorts, which have already been accumulated. Nor, probably, will it be thought fantastic, or out of place, to compare that repertory to the *cairn* of a great chieftain, the existence of which need not prevent any distant admirer from raising a solitary obelisk, however inadequate and simple, to his memory.

CHAPTER II.

BIRTH, PARENTAGE, AND EARLY POETICAL IMPRESSIONS.

SIR WALTER SCOTT, as is well known, was one of the sons of Walter Scott, Esq. Writer to the Signet, and was born at Edinburgh on the 15th of August, 1771. His father belonged professionally to that higher class of Edinburgh attorneys (among whom are often men of old family and good fortune), who are incorporated as an integral part of the "college of justice," deriving their title (as *every* southern reader may not be aware) from their exclusive right to draw up all such law-papers as require an affix of the royal seal.^x Of Mr. Scott, sen., little more is remembered than that he was a steady, prudent, unambitious, and honourable man of business, not pre-eminent for talents; but much respected by his clients; and so far tinged with literature, that he had collected a large library of miscellaneous as well as professional books, exhibiting, however, an overstock of controversial divinity. The poet's mother, who survived to an advanced age, and whom I remember seeing at her own house in 1805, was also a descendant of an old

and aristocratic family, and had through life a partiality for books, especially works of fiction and poetry, which, according to one of the late Sir John Sinclair's theories, her illustrious son may have directly inherited.

Of men afterwards greatly distinguished in the world, I know not if it has ever been remarked how many individuals were in early youth subjected to precarious health, this naturally leading to seclusion and sedentary amusement, instead of public-school discipline and boisterous competition; but certainly a long list might be adduced. For this cause it was found advisable to remove Scott, in early boyhood, from his father's house in the College-wynd at Edinburgh, to that of his grandfather, in a wildly beautiful district of Roxburghshire, where, among the lonely hills, he was allowed to spend many a day that would otherwise have been darkened by the premature tasks and restraints of a grammar-school.

Here, at all events, he was in a situation calculated to produce poetic impressions such as become indelible, and revive with double force in after-years. Of such feelings it is almost superfluous to remark, that he was from earliest youth keenly susceptible; but as no author ever spoke of his own talents more humbly than Scott, he used sometimes in conversation to deny, as applicable to himself, the maxim, *poeta nascitur*,

and to maintain, that whoever exerted an equal degree of labour or application, would achieve the same or equal results.

Truly this, though otherwise intended, was a mode of stating the question which an opponent would have found it no easy matter to disprove practically. It was much the same as if a champion, after having overthrown every one in the lists, were to say, "Good friends, I have not done all this through any great personal superiority: *only learn* to yield the lance and sword, and manage a horse with equal precision, and you will obtain equal triumphs."

But, that imagination and poetic sensibility, as well as strength, courage, and perseverance, depend *mainly* on gifts hereditary or innate, is a position which, of course, cannot seriously be disputed. Genius resembles the natural plant which an unknown power alone can supply; and education is the culture, without which the plant is often no better than a useless weed. Horace has summed up the argument in five words: "*Nec studium sine divite vend.*" Suppose a harp made of *stone*, and strung with *whip-cord*, to all intents and purposes it is still a harp, and may be played on after a fashion; but can any skill on earth extract good music out of such an instrument? Men differ from each other in original character almost as much as if they were composed of dif-

ferent materials. Will a born coward ever become truly brave by any efforts of discipline? Is it possible, by mere tuition, to form a musical ear, or an eye for painting? One might suppose that, in the case of young pupils, this last question might be answered in the affirmative; but experience teaches an opposite result. The piano is thumped and battered, and the canvass smeared, in vain. Michael Angelo himself could not *adequately* impress the laws of proportion and beauties of anatomy on one party, nor Mozart bring the other a single semibreve nearer to the *right* comprehension either of tune or time.

On the contrary, the self-disciplined soldier, like Blücher in boyhood, will contrive for himself means of gratifying his innate propensities, even though he has been sent to the quiet island of Rügen, among fishermen and farmers,* to be out of harm's way. The young poet will, unobserved, and perhaps unconsciously, accumulate materials or imagery for future composition, though he has only a halfpenny ballad of the olden time, and the inspiration derived from a wild heath, a ruined castle, and a moaning autumnal wind to assist him. The painter, also, like Opie in his early years, will do more with charcoal and chalk, and without a word of en-

* Vide Life of Blücher, by Varuhagen.

couragement or instruction, than one not gifted with the graphic impulse could effect, if the Royal Academy took him under their special protection.

Accordingly, men of genius have, in most instances, *educated themselves*, under circumstances rarely auspicious, and sometimes fearfully adverse, from which they have suddenly emerged with power and brilliancy altogether unexpected.

CHAPTER III.

LEADING TRAITS OF CHARACTER — MILITARY ARDOUR —
SCENERY AT SMAYLHOLME TOWER.

TILL within the last two years of his life, the *public* only knew Sir Walter Scott as a flourishing author in the plenitude of prosperity ; yet, as he once observed to the present writer, “ every step that he had gained in the world was hard won.” He might have added, “ *tamen labor ipsa voluptas est ;*” but this principle was at last carried to a degree which no bodily powers could support. He had never, it is true, been subject to the horrors of dependence ; was never placed in a situation inconsistent with his birth, lineage, and noble sentiments ; yet, in early life, he had some share of the “ *res angustæ domi ;*” nor, perhaps, was the farewell stanza addressed to the “ harp of the north” *wholly* without its foundation in truth :

“ Much have I owed thy charms, on life’s long way,
Through secret woes the world has never known.”

But, referring to these lines, he observed with his usual good-humoured drollery, “ as Master

Stephen* says, they are melancholy and gentlemanlike."

It was fortunate, therefore, that in his mind poetic sensibility and imagination, which have too often degenerated into irritability and caprice, were never allowed to assume any undue preponderance. It may rather be affirmed, that the ruling traits in his disposition were unconquerable courage, energy, and perseverance, endowments which he probably inherited from remote ancestors; but which, in his own case, were improved by self-education on the best principles of the old chivalrous character, wherein self-denial and generosity are predominant. Such qualities might possibly have advanced him to the rank of field-marshal, had not the lameness, caused by an accident in childhood, prevented his entering the army.

"In my younger days," he remarked in 1810, "I should unquestionably have preferred being a soldier to any other profession, and should not feel averse to it now, only with one modest stipulation, that I am to be a general from the outset. Circumstances forbid the notion of rising from the ranks; but, establish me once in full power, and good old John of Eldin † never

* *Vide* "Every Man in his Humour."

† The person here mentioned was John Clerk of Eldin, Esq., author of "Naval Tactics." In the garden adjoining

managed his fleet at Lasswade better than I should arrange my troops for action."

Accordingly, this disposition towards a military life had been shewn even in boyhood by the eagerness with which he heard, and fidelity with which he recollected, every old border ballad recited by friends during his abode in Roxburghshire, where the impressions of such rude, though powerful verses, were deepened by his access to the identical scenes which they commemorate. The lords and ladies, wizards and monks, dwarfs and fairies, lived only in song; but the mouldering fortresses existed in all the grandeur of gloom and desolation, as monuments to prove that the minstrels of old, marvellous as were their tales, had not dealt wholly in fiction, nor could it be said that their personages were without "local habitation and name."

In consequence of uncertain health, and until after his sixteenth year, it is probable that Scott, like his own Wilfred in "Rokeby," passed his leisure time, for the most part, in that sensitive mood of poetic reverie which, had it not been for innate energies that afterwards triumphed,

his house near Lasswade, was a pond where he used to amuse himself by floating his mimic ships; but, as a greater singularity, there was in the pond an island, cut and decorated into the resemblance of a seventy-four.

might have rendered him a mere dreamer, or poet of a very different class from that of which he afterwards became the chief. But a stout and chivalrous spirit lurked in a *then* weakly frame; and, of the elements from which Wilfred's character is composed, there was just enough inherited by Scott to produce those acute perceptions, and that high tone of feeling connected with the external influences of nature, from which are derived the best adornments and purest influences of poetry.

Consequently, the days which he spent in wandering through the wild districts of Roxburghshire were never forgotten, but supplied him with those vivid and accurate descriptions of scenery and seasons which beautify all his works of fiction, and are introduced with so much judgment as invariably to strengthen his delineation of character and passions.

Of the old ballads by which his attention was first drawn to poetry, Scott remarked (in a letter dated 1798), that, "considered in regard to their connexion with true history and real personages, these fragments ought never to be despised. They are," said he, "like the rapid but powerful drawings of an old master, which a modern hand, if sufficiently experienced, may yet transfer to the canvass, and finish into complete historical pictures."

How admirably he soon after realised this idea, must be admitted by all who have read the "Scottish Border Minstrelsy," in which work the ballads have been used as a starting point, whence to enter on a wide field of historical research; but in his allusion to "Sketches and Finished Pictures," Sir Walter possibly had, even in 1798, some inward anticipations of the highly wrought and accurate compositions which, as an ORIGINAL artist, he was destined to found on these rough models.

As already said, his earliest impressions of poetry were fixed and perpetuated by associations with surrounding objects and scenery. In the immediate vicinity of his grandfather's house, was the ruined tower of Smaylholme, situated among high crags, and commanding extensive prospects in every direction. This fortlet is naturally defended on three sides by a morass and precipitous cliffs, being accessible only by a steep and rocky path from the west. The stairs are (or were not long ago) in such a state of preservation, that one might safely ascend to the bartizan at the summit of the castle, which is lofty, and forms a landmark at a great distance. Near the court are the ruins of a chapel.

From his eighth or tenth year, this tower and the adjoining beacon-cliff, called the watch-fold, were his favourite haunts; and it may not be

unworthy to remark, that he was here on *ancestral* ground, Smaylholme tower, with the adjoining lands, being the property of his opulent relation, Mr. Scott of Harden.

Hither, after long previous wanderings, he would scramble up, carrying with him such books as he could obtain, and delighted to pore over. The place formed a kind of poetical observatory, whence he watched the varied aspects of the landscape, now darkened by the sweeping storm that howled through the desolate fortress, and now cheered by the shifting sunlight of an April or October day, while undisturbed his imagination might brood on the legendary lore which he had collected.

If Byron through life never ceased to remember the scenery of "dark Loch-na-gar," with which he became acquainted in childhood, no less durable in Scott's mind were the imagery and impulses derived from the crags of Smaylholme, the gloomy heath of Brotherston, and the "Eildon hills cleft in three;" but it was not till fifteen years later that, remembering these early dreams, he began to avail himself of such inspiration for the production of powerful and harmonious verse. Smaylholme Tower deserved to be especially recorded; and, as there happened to be no suitable legend of its own attached to the spot, he made it the scene of his

highly spirited ballad, probably the best of his earlier poems, entitled the "Eve of St. John," first published in his friend Monk Lewis's "Tales of Wonder."

CHAPTER IV.

CRITICAL REMARKS—CONVERSATION ON POETRY IN 1812.

It may be thought that I have dwelt too long on these early reveries, and the formation of his poetical taste, which, it must be owned, would have been of little value, were it not for the stores of acquired knowledge, and the sound sense, by which he was afterwards distinguished. Yet the subject is far from uninteresting, especially to those who remember the notable dispute betwixt Lord Byron and Mr. Bowles on the merits of Pope, and the question, What ought to be the prevailing characteristics of a true poet?

Perhaps there would be no great trouble in compressing the arguments of that controversy into narrow bounds. At all events, it can scarcely be disputed that, in the crowded walks of social life, and amid the affairs of the working world, whether in high ranks or low, imagination is chilled, and invention fettered. It is only by getting out of the mill-horse tract IN THOUGHT, if not in reality, that such powers can have free scope. Society may be pleasant, and its duties

interesting ; but, for the most part, its pleasures and duties are circumscribed and conventional, therefore not likely to harmonise with emotions and impressions such as, when recorded, will prove *effective* and intelligible over the whole world, and in future generations. On the contrary, the mind is enthralled by the necessity of attending to merely ephemeral tasks, of which the interest often hinges on a question of little more dignity and moment than that of warm carpeted parlours in winter, or a grotto (*vide* Pope), stuck with shells, for the summer season.

Such questions arise and pass away ; nor are the fantastic systems of particular *coteries* in literature less transient. Who cares *now* for the principles of taste and criticism adopted in France, at the court of Louis XIV. ? or, in England, during the reign of Charles II. ? The habits, or, I might say, *duties* of society then required that every man should wear an enormous curled periwig, containing about a ton weight of horse-hair ; and even the *pleasures* considered suitable for a cavalier *comme il faut*, were not less influenced by eccentricity and caprice. In those days Sir Charles Sedley had a fairer reputation than "one John Milton, the old blind schoolmaster, who had lately *writ* a poem ;" for the copyright of which, be it always remembered, he received fifteen pounds ; and which, till Ad-

dison reviewed it thirty years afterwards, nobody would read.

Might not the debate on the true elements of the poetical character, or on poetical habits, resolve itself into this conclusion, that the narratives, arguments, emotions, and eloquence, which are associated with imagery *lasting and universal*, stand the best chance of being *widely* appreciated, and *lasting* to future ages? The winds, clouds, and sunshine,—the hail, rain, and thunder of heaven,—the green hills, waving woods, rocky cliffs, and wild heaths of the earth, with all its leaves, flowers, and blossoms, are universal and perpetual; therefore, the style of language they inspire is universally understood. A taste for such imagery is not conventional, nor dependent on the caprice of fashion. The sun, moon, and stars (pardon the truism), were the same in Homer's day as they are now.

Consequently, in spite of those who maintain that Racine is the first of poets in France, and Pope the *facile princeps* in England, it certainly must be admitted that the man who comes into the arena of literary competition, armed with verses (let the subject still be human adventures and passions), but which he has composed while wandering amid mountain solitudes, and listening to the eloquence of nature in her cataracts, winds, and waving forests, will have a far more powerful

voice than the gentleman who wrote elegant, trim, and precise verses at Eton or Harrow,—proved acute in geometry or algebra at Cambridge,—and who finally settles into his library in Grosvenor Street, *turning*, occasionally, an ode of Horace, and estimating Pope's "Pastorals" and "Windsor Forest" as unexceptionable models.

But enough, and too much of such remarks, from which I shall abstain through the rest of this Memoir, unless when scraps of criticism (as in the next three pages) may occur in recollected conversations with Sir Walter Scott.

In 1812, a minor author of the *tenth* grade, having been kindly admitted into the *sanctum* of the house in Castle Street, happened to insist that Pope was no poet, but a mere mechanic, who gleaned thoughts from others, and had the art of setting them forth in verse, which, though melodious, was tiresome from want of variety.

As usual, when any vehement and sweeping assertion was made, he smiled good-humouredly; for even on subjects of importance, far less about criticism, it was impossible to draw him into dispute. Then, assuming a serious air, "Rely on it," said he, "the time will come when you will admit that Pope, whatever be his defects, was a worthy *deacon of the craft*; and, if he

gleaned thoughts from others, almost always improved on his models. We must not limit poetical merit to the class of composition which exactly suits one's own particular taste."

"But," persisted the argumentator, who was a descriptive sonneteer, "I must confess my inability to discover in Pope the energies of a poet. There are, in his works, no descriptions either of character or scenery drawn from real life. All is either borrowed or artificial, and he is a decided mannerist."

"Rather say, not the kind of life and scenery which you like best to see drawn," answered Mr. Scott; "but it is going too far, merely on this account, to deny the far-famed bard of Twickenham that laurel wreath which, in spite of infirm health and the seduction of potted lampreys, he laboured so assiduously to win. Would you like to hear my compendious definition of poetry?"

"From a first-rate master the definition of art must be inestimable."

"Umph!" rejoined the minstrel, smiling rather sarcastically at this very needless attempt at compliment. "Well; here you have it. Poetry is the art of expressing or illustrating ideas, arguments, characters, situations, moral lessons, emotions, and events, in clear, melodious, and powerful

language, such as *will place the subject in a new light*, and is fitted to impress the minds of an audience, and to be remembered."

"But the true poet must be an original genius; he must, as the name imparts, have creative power."

"Ha! ha! *creative* is a strong term. But, if an author expresses an old idea in a new way, will you not allow him, even on that score, a share of originality? Suppose a clever workman makes an elegant elbow-chair out of a lumbering old *settle*, is he not as praiseworthy as another who begins on new timber?—Or must the said workman be denied all merit unless he finds out some absolutely new materials, which no one but himself ever thought of using? I had a house ready made when I commenced operations at Abbotsford; a queer one it is true, but still, to all intents and purposes, it was a house; and, notwithstanding its previous existence, I must frankly own that I am very proud of the originality already displayed in mere improvements, not to mention the grand architectural schemes which are hereafter to be realised. At present, however, they are scarcely to be reckoned *in posse*; which, as we lawyers find, often proves no better than *in nubibus*."

"And would you number such writers as Butler and Swift among poets?"

“ I should be sorry if they were not so numbered ; Hudibras, especially, being a great friend of mine ; and, as to Swift, though Gulliver is beyond comparison his best work, yet some of the dean’s verses are not to be despised. But, if you put the question, whether there are not some authors whom I join with you in liking much better than either ? I should answer at once in the affirmative. Besides, I cordially agree in a preference for poetry that has been indited ‘ all under the greenwood tree.’ The life of ‘ Robin Hood ’ has great charms for a minstrel.”

“ Surely the grand principle of the poet should be to study nature, instead of limiting his attention always to the same tiresome models.”

“ Variety is pleasant, certainly. On this account I have always been disposed to put more faith in Scotch fairies than in the ‘ muses nine ;’ and, if there must be gods and goddesses, would, upon the whole, prefer to deal with Odin and Freya, rather than Jupiter and Juno. As to the actual study of nature, if you mean the landscape-gardening of poetry, I know not how it may be with others, but, for my own part, I can get on quite as well from recollection while sitting in the parliament house, as if wandering through wood and wold ; though liable to be roused out

of a descriptive dream now and then, if Balmuto, with a fierce grunt, demands, 'Where are your *cautioners?*' " *

The author of Waverley so seldom talked of himself, that even scraps like this seem not unworthy of preservation.

* Lord Balmuto was one of the Scotch judges ; and remarkable for an odd manner of enunciation, which was very ludicrously mimicked by his brother senator, Lord Cullen.

CHAPTER V.

EDUCATION AT THE HIGH SCHOOL — STATE OF LITERATURE
FROM 1780 TO 1794 — BEATTIE'S MINSTREL — MERITS OF
SMOLLET.

OF Scott's boyhood, many anecdotes have been told, which hardly deserve repetition. It is worthy of remark, however, that almost all of them hinge on his juvenile passion for enterprise, romantic legends, and the profession of a soldier.

Sometimes, also, they indicate a waywardness and caprice of temper, which, if natural to his character (as is very probable), he had in after life most thoroughly subdued.

The roving habits and minstrel dreams of the lovely child at Smaylholme Tower were ill-adapted to promote his advancement at the class of Mr. Luke Fraser, one of the masters of the Edinburgh High School, where Scott's name was first entered in December 1779. The first task imposed by Mr. Fraser, was to get by heart the Latin rudiments. But in the case of one whose intellect and feelings had already been roused,—where there existed, even in childhood, a fondness for books, of which the sense was understood, it was

no easy matter to force lessons that were to be learned merely by rote, without one iota of intelligence thence derived; and without even any adequate explanation why it was necessary that the task should be encountered.

The rudiments were overcome; which, of course, afforded no other impression but that of a repulsive penalty imposed on the victim of arbitrary power. On this followed the usual diversions of Corderius's Colloquies, Cæsar's Commentaries, and Cornelius Nepos; which, if they had been thoroughly understood, would not perhaps have afforded much entertainment for one whose boyish mind was already stored with more interesting *materiel*,—

“ With tales that cheered the winter's hearth,
 Alternating from wo to mirth;
 Of lovers' slights, of ladies' charms,
 Of witches' spells, of warriors' arms;
 Of patriot battles won of old
 By Wallace wight and Bruce the bold;
 Of later fields of feud and fight,
 When pouring from their mountain height,
 The Scottish clans in headlong sway
 Had swept the scarlet ranks away.”

But the worst is, that these early studies are too often conducted in such manner as to have no efficacy in the department of learning which they are intended to promote; and, in fact, have

no other useful result but that of trying a child's patience, and keeping him out of harm's way. A correct knowledge of grammar is certainly indispensable ; while to have the power of carrying on trains of thought in a foreign language, whether a dead or a living one,—to *write* as well as to read it with facility, are invaluable acquisitions ; but, unfortunately, there are too many schools in which these do not seem, in reality, to be the objects aimed at. On the contrary, the existing system tends only to encourage boys who, by a kind of mechanical effort, submit themselves to be led on and guided through certain tasks, which very possibly leave them as ignorant of the true spirit and principles of the language, as when they commenced. Paradoxical as it may seem, the best writer of themes, and learner of exercises, is not always the best scholar, in a full sense of that word ; and a youth of mediocre abilities may come through the trials honourably, though little benefited by such labours in after life.

Unluckily for himself, Scott, at this period, proved a very unmanageable pupil. Julius Cæsar, in his own immortal Commentaries, did not prove an agreeable companion on the benches of Mr. Luke Fraser's class-room ; nor could the heroes of Cornelius Nepos equal in interest the "Laird of Thirlestane," or "Christie's Will."

In short, his attendance was irregular, and his progress below par; yet he could not be reproached with dulness. On the contrary, he was not only alert in youthful exploits with his companions, but acute in comprehension for all but the mechanical tasks of the High School; where he used to sit impatient and disconsolate till the time came when he could either betake himself to his sports, or, as frequently happened, secure an old folio from his father's library, over which (particularly if it related to Scottish history) he would pore intently for hours together.

A town more completely dissimilar to the modern Athens it would be scarce possible to imagine than Edinburgh presented during the years from 1780 to 1790. It is of little consequence to observe that only a few houses of the new town were then built, for I do not allude to the dissimilarity of inanimate objects. In all points except that of hospitality, with a disposition to jovial habits and good living, the manners, customs, and opinions of the people, both of high and low ranks, were immeasurably different from those of the present generation. The "*Scotia vera et barbara*" of that period affords, indeed, but a bad field for the *laudator temporis acti*; and had it not been for innate propensities, and the impressions made by Smayl-

holme Tower and the old ballads, Scott would have stood little chance of being led into the pursuit of poetry and romance by the *prevalent* examples and literary taste which existed, both in England and the north, fifty years ago.

It is almost needless to remind the reader, that Scotland could then boast of many authors highly eminent; for example, take only Hume, Robertson, Mackenzie, Lord Kaimes, and Beattie. Yet the fountain of poetry was at the lowest possible ebb; as the strongest proof of which may be adduced, the facility with which Hayley, in England, raised himself to high reputation. Let it always be remembered, too, that, about this time, Burns, who has since been so extravagantly over-rated, was allowed to contend with the most abject poverty, receiving, for all the songs which he contributed to Thomson's Collection, the *splendid honorarium* of *five pounds*! With regard to works of fiction, it is not unworthy of remark, that the same era gave rise to a very odd class of "fashionable novels;" namely, productions pompously announced as in three or four volumes, but which contained so few pages, and were so widely printed, that a volume, at least, if not a whole work, might be thoroughly perused during the time that was then considered indispensable for the operations of the *perruquier*. A vehement contrast, truly, to the

closely printed volumes of Richardson, in whose days the still extant periwig rendered such complicated and tiresome proceedings out of the question for onè sex, and the charm of scientific curls was not so inordinately displayed by the other!

Of the five authors to whom I have alluded, Beattie, as a poet, deserves particular notice, were it only for the analogy betwixt his habits in early life and those of Sir Walter Scott. The scenes described in the "Minstrel," the vivid feelings which animate its stanzas, were all drawn and derived from recollection of rambles in boyhood, through the wild and gloomy, though not unpicturesque hills in the neighbourhood of Lawrencekirk and Fordun. There he actually beheld the landscapes which he afterwards delineated in verse; and which, like the Eildon hills with Scott, or Loch-na-gar with Lord Byron, never faded from his memory. But Beattie engaged in long laborious works of a different description; besides, was of a melancholy temperament, increased latterly by domestic misfortunes, otherwise he might have risen to far greater eminence as a poet.

But were I to instance any Scottish author who, in point of talent and energy, might be compared to Sir Walter Scott, I should be inclined to name Smollet, as a man of Herculean

and versatile powers ; also possessing, in a high degree, the vivid emotions of a poet. In proof of which, need only be adduced his Odes to Independence, to Leven Water, and on the Civil War of 1745. Yet, through nearly the whole of his life, Smollet contended with pecuniary embarrassments ; and, like the illustrious subject of these *memoranda*, undertook tasks for which human strength was unequal, at a period, moreover, when the rewards of literary labour, unlike those of more modern days, afforded but poor encouragement for its votaries. Hence, even the genius of Smollet and Fielding could scarce protect them from want, while it supplied the public with those admirable fictions which, notwithstanding their objectionable licentiousness, still retain a place in every library.

Of Smollet, Sir Walter Scott entertained a lively admiration.

“ Few stories,” he has observed, “ are more distressing than that of his latter years ; especially when he represents himself as existing in a state of *coma vigil* ; which proceeded, doubtless, from overstraining of the nervous system, from disappointments, and from being forced to turn his exertions into channels which did not accord with his natural disposition. How melancholy, too, is it to read the account of his foreign tour, when, having postponed recreation and relaxa-

tion till it was too late; he travelled on the continent amid scenes which, at an earlier period, would have afforded him intense interest, but where he then obstinately selected such impressions as were painful and repulsive! To a man in that state, even the remains of ancient Rome would present no better imagery than that of mere mouldering walls; and, in the midst of all its wonders, he would long for his own fire-side, his elbow-chair, and his bed, wherein to sleep, forgetting, *if possible, for ever*, the weariness of this unprofitable world.

“Naturally,” he continues, “Smollet had almost as much poetic power as Burns, and the faculty only required cultivation to raise him to a high rank in that department. There is poetry even in his prose novels, where every scene and every character is so vividly conceived and depicted. In a word, Smollet was a man of rare and extraordinary powers, such as do not occur above twice in a century, and had he lived in our times, would have made a fortune even by the bad trade of authorship.”

The reader will, without my suggestion, observe the analogy (which I have no wish to dwell upon) betwixt *this* melancholy picture and the visit of Sir Walter Scott to Italy, in 1831. “The soul and body,” as he once observed in his usual homely style of colloquy, “are here in partner-

ship, and like the partners in a commercial firm, if one sinks the other founders also." Notwithstanding the analogy, however, betwixt him and Smollet in this instance, there was also a wide difference, for Scott evinced no acrimony, and made no splenetic remarks; there was no change of principles in his mind; only the derangement and decay of *bodily* powers wholly cut off the power of enjoyment.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. H. MACKENZIE—DR. ADAM—STORY-TELLING—POWERS
OF MEMORY AND PLASTIC IMPROVEMENT.

AMONG the *literati* always resident in Edinburgh, who were well acquainted with Scott, perhaps the most distinguished was the late venerable Mr. H. Mackenzie, who had acquired no slight reputation, whilst the author of *Waverley* was yet in his childhood. Betwixt them there continued a cordial intimacy, and unlike as they might appear to a superficial observer, there yet existed many points of similarity in their characters.

In both, whilst holding high ground in the literary world, there was this most perfect absence of self-conceit, envy, and censorious bitterness towards contemporary authors. Mackenzie, like Scott, was always ready to discover merit in others, to promote the efforts of deserving *aspirants*, and, by his hearty praise, add fresh laurels to the wreaths of those who had signalised themselves in the literary arena. For vivacity of conversation, too, they might be designated *Arcades ambo*; and Mackenzie was one of the few individuals by whom Scott could be led even into

the semblance of an argument, conscious as he no doubt was, that his friendly opponent, like himself, talked only from a wish for mutual instruction and entertainment, not from the pugnacious obstinacy of a narrow mind bent on asserting its own dogmas, or proving its own fancied superiority. In their amusements, too, their love of the country and field-sports, there was a congeniality. Up to his seventy-ninth year, after which he suffered by lameness, Mr. H. Mackenzie used to take the field with his couple of pointers and fowling-piece, as buoyant and vivacious in spirit as if he had been only nineteen. The author of the "Man of Feeling" was in form thin and attenuated, with features not unlike those of Voltaire, if the sarcastic and somewhat malevolent expression be excepted. He was an acute man of business, an admirable critic, an entertaining companion, a steady and kind friend.

But to return. In regard to Scott's progress at the High School, some change for the better took place, when, in his twelfth or fourteenth year, he was transferred to the class of the rector, Dr. Alexander Adam, who, in his peculiar department, was unquestionably a man of genius, and evinced the most persevering industry. Deeply read in the Classics, the doctor took a real and enthusiastic interest in his own studies; in fact, might be represented as conferring, in a

limited degree, the same services respecting Roman literature, which Sir Walter Scott afterwards effected with regard to the remnants of old minstrelsy. He traced out ideas as well as words to their origin, and delighted by means of parallel passages to illustrate and revive the great characters of antiquity, and explain ancient manners and customs, so that their tendency might be thoroughly felt and understood. Through the day he was of course occupied with his duties as head master, and his publications (especially, for example, the "Ancient Geography,") requiring much time, as well as labour, he was in the habit of rising all the year round at four in the morning. Consequently, in winter, he betook himself to the kitchen, where, by the aid of a *happin peat* left in the grate over night, he kindled a good fire, without troubling any of his small establishment to assist him. Hither he brought his table and books, and passed many an hour in writing or research, long before others thought of commencing the business of the day. Among Dr. Adam's peculiarities was his activity as a pedestrian, by which his health and spirits were promoted and preserved to a very advanced age. In the welfare of his pupils he took a lively interest, and was generally attended in his holiday rambles by one or two of those boys who had

acquired his good opinion, with whom he would converse freely on what they had read, and enable them to apply their learning practically to the business of life.

I do not remember having heard Scott speak of Dr. Adam, but doubt not one of his biographers (in a weekly journal) is in the right, who observes, that such an example may have had some influence on the poet's future habits of life as to early rising and industry.

But, as Sir Walter has himself recorded, not even Dr. Adam's example and instructions could make him an accurate scholar, nor a writer of trim and precise exercises. Even his metrical themes were deficient in those points which are essential in the eyes of a pedagogue, and he left the High School without the most distant presage of his inherent talents for literary distinction. Meanwhile, his mind, in its own favourite departments, was never idle; and he has himself described the kind of amusement which then afforded him most pleasure.

"I must refer," says he, "to a very early period of my life, were I to point out my first achievements as a story-teller; but I believe some of my old school-fellows can still bear witness that I had a distinguished character for that talent, at a time when the applause of my companions was my re-

compense for the disgraces and punishments which the future romance writer incurred for being idle himself, and keeping others idle during hours that should have been employed on our tasks. The chief enjoyment of my holidays was to escape with a chosen friend, who had the same taste with myself, and alternately to recite to each other such wild adventures as we were able to devise. We told each, in turn, interminable tales of knight-errantry, and battles, and enchantments, which were continued from one day to another, as opportunity offered, without our ever thinking of bringing them to a conclusion. As we observed a strict secrecy on the subject of this intercourse, it acquired all the character of a concealed pleasure; and we used to select for the scenes of our indulgence long walks through the solitary and romantic environs of Arthur's Seat, Salisbury Crags, Braid Hills, and similar places in the vicinity of Edinburgh; and the recollection of these holidays still forms an oasis in the pilgrimage that I have to look back upon."

Among other favourite scenes of these juvenile rambles may be reckoned the neighbourhood of Kelso, where Scott passed some time, and where, also, he attended school. There he became acquainted with the three Messrs. Ballantyne, who used occasionally to be his companions in these

story-telling excursions, and with whom he kept up a friendly and confidential intercourse during the whole of his after life.

On such occasions, though he has described the task of romantic invention as being mutual, yet it is almost superfluous to observe, that little more was required of his associates than to play the part of good listeners. But the power thus evinced by Scott, in fixing the attention of his auditors, was immeasurably different from that of a whimsical *improvisatore* who utters a vague rhapsody, perhaps very magnificent in sound, but containing, in reality, no sentiments or imagery which can either dwell in recollection, or deserve to be recollected. One great secret of his art depended on a faculty, which, even from childhood, he possessed in a most extraordinary degree, namely, that of *memory*, which, to the same extent, is very rarely united to *original* genius. All who knew the author of "Waverley" will be ready to bear me out in asserting, that this was one of his most remarkable characteristics; for whatever narratives, either in prose or verse, he had once read or heard, were never entirely forgotten. Of this, instances frequently occurred at convivial parties, if a *bon-vivant* wished to favour the company with a song, whilst his treacherous memory declined supplying him with the

words. At such times Scott used to help out the performer in a style most ludicrously adapted to the occasion, and was usually prepared, from beginning to end, with every stanza. Strange as it may seem, he, in this way, stored up dross and rubbish, as well as better materials, and yet without the slightest confusion, so that a friend once compared his mind to a kaleidoscope, which retains and displays its symmetrical powers, however coarse may be the substances placed within it. *A propos*, I remember, when, at a jovial party, about midnight, regret being expressed, that one of the company had gone without being called on for a particular song, which he usually gave in such manner as to excite much laughter, Mr. Scott immediately observed, "If the *words* without the *music* will be acceptable, I am quite ready." Then, with an accurate adherence to the *forecastle* style of *recitativo*, he began :

" I courted Molly of Spithead,
And asked her to be marri-ed ;
At first she vas most cruel kind,
But she proved valse, as you shall find ;
With a chip chow, fal lal de ray !"

And so forth, without missing a line of the nonsense. One of the poems he most willingly recited, was the "Red King," by Mr. William Stewart Rose :

“ The Red King lies in Malwood keep ;
To drive the deer o'er moor and steep,
He's bound him with the morn ;
His horse is fleet, his hounds are good ;
The like in covert or high wood,
Were never cheered with horn,” &c.

Among other instances, it happened when a copy of a *then* anonymous poem, the “ Inch Cape Rock,” was wanted for insertion in the “ Edinburgh Annual Register,” he produced the whole from recollection, strengthening the verses, however, and giving more clearness to the story ; so that, but for his denial, it might have been looked on as his own composition.

In fact, the mainspring of interest attached to his *repetitions* as a story-teller, depended on improvements and alterations, which he freely made on his original. According to his own ludicrous metaphor of the workman who created a handsome elbow-chair out of a “ lumbering old *settle*,” it may be said that even the *membra disjecta*, the fragment, or even a single spar of the old furniture, sufficed for him. He had almost magical power to produce a lasting superstructure, even on the most trifling foundation. In his hands, all materials derived from history, romance, or legend, with which memory supplied him, became in the utmost degree *plastic* ; so that, while the leading incidents remained, the

general character of the narrative, and impressions it conveyed, were entirely new, and altogether his own. Goethe's words on the poetical character, as exemplified in Tasso, are here also applicable :

“ What History or Experience could afford,
He grasped in fragments ; yet, from them brought forth
A grand symmetric whole ; by his own fervour
Enlivening that which else were cold and dead.”

Hence the almost miraculous facility with which he seemed to compose his prose fictions. A scene was laid, a period of history, and some leading characters were chosen. The scene, if he had once beheld it, rose up around him with all the force of reality. He knew “ every dell and bosky bourne of the wild wood.” The principal events of history, the costume and habits of the era once learned, were on his mind indelible. He needed not any recurrence to books for assistance ; but, sometimes, he did turn to maps, in order that he might be accurate in distances. As to characters, *these*, for the most part, like every good painter, he modelled from real life ; of which it is superfluous to observe, he had been an attentive and scrutinising spectator. Respecting the plot, he might have revolved in his mind hundreds of intricate fables derived from novel reading, and on some

insipid production of the Minerva press, forgotten by all but himself, have constructed a fiction amply suited for his purpose. *But this was never done.* With regard to the plot, indeed, he was comparatively careless; the invention, the actual creation of it, rose mysteriously out of the delineation of situation and character.

CHAPTER VII.

MUSIC—EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY—JAMES HOGG, SEN.—
PERSEVERANCE—LONG ILLNESS—NOVEL READING—COM-
MAND OF TEMPER.

IN one of the brief Memoirs already published, it has been observed that, during Scott's early youth, an attempt was made to give him instructions in music, which failed. It is added, that he was "totally deficient in musical ear," and incapable of producing two consecutive notes that were correct, either as to tune or time. This, however, is erroneous. For intricate compositions, which can scarcely be admired without scientific study, he probably had no taste: yet he delighted in music; and there were many Scotch airs for which he had an enthusiastic predilection; and which, without any pretensions to musical voice, he could strike up in convivial parties with perfect correctness; though, for the better entertainment of his auditors, the performance was generally grotesque, and the ditty comic. Among his especial favourites were, "Auld lang syne," "Bannocks o' bear meal, bannocks o' barley," and "Kenmure's on and awa."

About the year 1784, he matriculated at the College of Edinburgh, entering the classes of Professors Hill and Mr. Dalzell for Latin and Greek ; but his attendance afterwards was not exemplary, nor did he profit more by his academic studies than by those formerly at the High School. This, however, is not much to be wondered at. What the system *now* may be at the Edinburgh University, I know not ; but, though the above-named professors were themselves eminent scholars, there was little in their public mode of discipline that was calculated to attract a wayward pupil ; nor, dissimilar as they were in manners, did either succeed in maintaining much of professorial dignity in his class-room.

As might have been expected, the young poet was by no means complimented by them on his appearances when examined. But, in proof of what I have elsewhere said with regard to dull boys rising to distinction at school by mere mechanical efforts and docility, it may be noticed, that one of his class-fellows, the late worthy Mr. James Hogg (afterwards a private teacher at Edinburgh), always went through the ordeal with great precision and *éclat*.

By many living practitioners at the Scotch bar, James Hogg is no doubt kindly remembered ; and to those who did not know him, it would have been difficult for any one, except

the author of "Waverley" himself, to convey an adequate idea of a being so ludicrously formal, so learned, and yet in intellect so *borné*. The employment adopted by Mr. Hogg was that of "grinder," or private assistant to students who (perhaps *invittissimá Minervá*,) are preparing to undergo their public trials for the learned professions; and who, not being much accustomed to carry on discourse in Latin, would find the necessity of so doing a stumbling-block quite sufficient to overcome their courage; not to mention the dry and repulsive questions of law or medical science, which they were expected to have at their finger-ends. To those whose hard fate imposed on them the necessity of grinding for an examination on Roman law, Mr. Hogg proved an invaluable acquisition. Had any one wished to study more profoundly, he would, with the most inflexible perseverance, have expounded every chapter and clause of the whole *corpus juris*, even had the volume been five times its existing bulk. According to modern practice, however, it was not unusual to obtain a private hint from the examiners on what chapter their questions were to be founded. These were conned over night and day; and, finally, if the student was not able to compose in Latin his own inaugural dissertation, he might choose a subject at hazard; and Mr. Hogg would, at forty-eight

hours' notice, supply him with a discourse which always answered the purpose quite as well as if the style had been Ciceronian. By such means, the worthy man made an income of, perhaps, 200*l.* per annum ; to him an ample fortune ; for assuredly more than two-thirds of that revenue were saved.

Here let me be allowed a very short digression, to notice a singular example of Scotch perseverance, which is not quite irrelevant, as I have repeatedly heard it mentioned by Sir Walter Scott. About forty years ago, it happened that an individual (since eminent at the bar), made the usual application to be examined on civil law. He was of humble birth, poor, and friendless ; had neither grinder to prepare him, nor influence to obtain from the examiners a previous hint on what sections they were disposed to put their questions. Moreover, the faculty being somewhat aristocratic, were not altogether disposed to admit such a member, and on trial he was declared incompetent. This was a heavy blow for the poor and lonely aspirant ; but fortitude rendered it almost harmless. He knew that a year must elapse before he could renew his application ; and through that whole time, it is said, he subsisted on bread and water, or tea. Returning home directly to his lodgings, he began, by way of *sedative*, to translate the *entire*

Corpus Juris, and (*mirabile dictu*) accomplished the task ; so that, long before the year was ended, his *complete* translation was engrossed in a beautiful and minute hand. This was for amusement merely, but he carefully studied the commentators. "Next time," said he, "my inquisitors shall have enough of it!" Accordingly, on his second appearance, he was not contented with merely answering the questions put to him, but ran on with a regular dissertation upon each, till the learned examiners, who, comparatively speaking, knew nothing of the matter, were too glad to pronounce him qualified, and get rid of a candidate by whom they were so direfully cast into the shade.

But to return. That Mr. Hogg was a sound scholar, there could be no doubt; and for invincible patience and good-humour, he was almost unequalled. At all hours of the night and day, from seven o'clock of a dark winter morning till midnight, he might be met on his way from one pupil's house to another, with the identical long great-coat close buttoned to his tall gaunt figure, and the identical cotton umbrella, both of which had lasted him at least twenty years, and with the same expression of calm contentment and placidity on his features. I believe this personage had some share in con-

tributing as a model to the portrait of "Dominie Sampson;" which may afford some excuse for devoting so many lines to his memory. In study he was, like the Dominie, indefatigable; but the works of Heineccius were quite as entertaining and acceptable to him as those of Cicero; and he would most willingly have laid down Cervantes or Shakespeare (of whom, in all probability, he had read neither), in order to take up "Durie's Decisions," or "Erskine's Institutes."

An individual like this was exactly calculated to shine at examinations in the Edinburgh University; and those who could not, or would not succeed so well in the same arena, revenged themselves for the disappointment by turning into ridicule the uncouth and formal student who had triumphed over them. On one occasion, Scott, to the great amusement of his class-fellows, affixed to Mr. Hogg's coat-collar a slip of paper, inscribed, "*The learned pig casts accounts;*" with which, unconsciously, he paraded through the college-court. James Hogg soon found out the individual to whom he was indebted for this distinction; a quarrel and fight were the consequence; in which, as might be expected, Scott proved no flincher. I know not how it terminated; but probably the battle was a drawn one,

as a friendly feeling always existed between them, *malgré* the difference of rank and character.

Owing to the combined obstacles of bad health, and, probably, his disgust at the Edinburgh University, he seems to have gone through no regular course of education there, except that to which, in later years, he was necessitated, in order to become qualified for passing his trials at the Scottish bar. In fact, after his entrance at college, till his seventeenth year, he was, through more than half the time, subjected to that hazardous illness, the effects of which he has himself described. *Naturally*, Scott was not only buoyant in spirits, but irritable in temper; and, by some over exertion, he had the misfortune to rupture a blood-vessel, an injury which could only be repaired by the most perfect state of quiescence, and the most rigorous abstinence from food more than was absolutely necessary to support existence. In his case it was to be expected that the utmost precaution must be observed in order to secure obedience to such irksome regimen; and it is probable that, to his inordinate love of reading, he owed the preservation of his life. To induce tranquillity and submission to medical treatment, the best and only method was to allow him the free use of books, and to make his own choice

of what he wished to read. The library of Mr. Scott, sen. (who, at this time, resided in George Square), was far from inconsiderable; and its contents proved of great service to him in after years, as there was not merely an ample stock of law books for professional reference, but of history, antiquarianism, and even theology. These, however, could not afford sufficient entertainment in his present state; and, having subscribed to a long-established and extensive circulating library in Edinburgh, he actually, in the course of his slow convalescence, read through almost the whole of the romances, old plays, and poetry, of the collection, "*unconsciously*," as he observes, "amassing materials for the task in which he was afterwards to be so much employed."

"At the same time," he adds, "I did not in all respects abuse the license permitted me. Familiar acquaintance with the specious miracles of fiction brought with it some degree of satiety; and I began to seek in history, memoirs, voyages, travels, and the like, events nearly as wonderful as those which were the work of imagination, with the additional advantage, that they were at least in a great measure true. The lapse of nearly two years, during which I was left to the service of my own free will, was followed by a temporary residence in the country, *where I was again very lonely*, but for the amusement I

derived from a good, though old-fashioned library. The vague and wild use I made of this advantage, I cannot describe better than by referring my readers to the desultory studies of "Waverley" in a similar situation, the passages concerning whose reading were imitated from the recollection of my own."

The ability to derive benefit even from misfortune, and to extract good from evil, is surely one of the most distinguishing characteristics, both of an amiable disposition, and powerful mind. To this illness it is obvious that Scott owed his subsequent predilection for romance-writing; but, to the same cause may, perhaps, be ascribed, in great measure, that unexampled command of temper which it was almost impossible to disturb, and the inimitable patience which he afterwards displayed. In proof of his extraordinary patience, need only be adduced the many arduous tasks to which, independently of his novels, plays, poems, and ballads, he submitted himself with a calm, equable enthusiasm (for enthusiasm *may* be calm), such as has not elsewhere been equalled since those early eras of the Christian faith, when a single individual, with his own hand, wrote more than, in the same space of time, it would have been supposed possible for *ten* caligraphers to accomplish. But when it is also recollected in

what degree, from the year 1806 to 1830, he was subjected to the daily worry of business, to hourly interruptions of his literary labour, and to harrassing applications from all quarters for assistance, advice, and patronage; those who remember with what mildness and unconquerable good-humour all this was borne, will not wonder at my assertion, that his patience was unexampled and inimitable. Perhaps on this virtue, also, depended the power which he possessed of retaining his own trains of thought unbroken by outward disturbance; of escaping at will from present scenes into an ideal world; also, that admirable harmony preserved in his own mind, where no *one* principle or faculty was suffered to obtain an undue preponderance, to the injury of the rest.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONVALESCENCE — THE BAR, AND SPECULATIVE SOCIETY —
OUTER HOUSE, AND STOVE SCHOOL — STUDY OF MODERN
LANGUAGES.

AFTER his sixteenth year, his constitution began rapidly to triumph over the indisposition by which he had hitherto been, at all times, more or less molested. He became keenly addicted to field sports, which contributed to his perfect recovery; and, as his fondness for books and study seemed well suited to the habits expected from a special pleader, it was decided that he should qualify himself for the legal profession. For this he had some peculiar advantages; as, in regard to Scotch law, he needed only to study zealously under his father's care, in whose office all the forms of process, and routine of practice, were to be learned, and whose library, as already mentioned, afforded an ample stock of books.

Accordingly, he went through the usual forensic course of education; and, in his twenty-first year, assumed his gown, and paraded the outer house. But, as he had before *unconsci-*

ously amassed materials for the task in which he was afterwards to be engaged, so it is very possible, that with the intention of proceeding exactly as a man of business ought to do, he all the while, and *unconsciously*, despised his employments at the bar. This may seem paradoxical. However, we find no instance on record, except one criminal case, in which his powers as an advocate were called into action and concentrated. Had he seriously determined on rising to high honours in his profession, there can be no doubt he would have attained his object. But faculties immeasurably inferior to those of the author of "Waverley" could, *when drawn into a focus*, effect the purpose at which, apparently, Scott had aimed in vain. The truth was, however, that he never roused his energies, or looked steadily at the mark.

Amongst other preliminary steps towards becoming an advocate, he entered the Speculative Society, a literary and debating club; since noted for having had among its members many of the most distinguished men both of England and Scotland. This club had a room and library of their own in the college; and met once a week during the winter session of the courts; when, in the first place, an original essay was read by some one of the members, whose production was freely commented on and criticised. Thereafter

a question was proposed from the chair, and discussed with far more adherence to dignified formality than that of the British senate.

As "shallow streams make the most noise," it often happened that the most distinguished orators in the Speculative Society had little else but their fluent verbosity to recommend them; and, by all accounts, Scott was more inclined to turn the proceedings of the "honourable house" into ridicule, than to make any brilliant figure at its debates. Moreover, so little practised was he then in composition, that the production of a literary essay, when it fell to his turn, was not achieved without considerable labour, and seemed to be undertaken *invitâ Minervâ*.

To one who is not imbued with a genuine taste for the enlivening contests of the bar, as well as prepared with legal knowledge, and resolutely bent on living by the profits of his profession, the Edinburgh *outer house* is the worst school that can be imagined. If employment does not increase, habits of idleness and dissipation are *almost* inevitable. Through the whole of the winter months the young aspirant must rouse before day-light, and, *malgré* pitiless east winds and driving sleet, proceed to the great hall, where it is considered indispensable that he should make his appearance by nine o'clock. From nine till ten, few of the elder and more experi-

enced practitioners, unless when particularly requested, condescend to *turn out* ; and, as to the youths, who “stand and wait” at nine, unless favoured by influence and connexion, they may, for the first year, consider themselves honoured, if requested by the “writers” to address a few words to the judges in absence of senior counsel, for which service no fee is given or expected. However, they must be careful even as to the mode in which this operation is gone through, as, according to the tact, precision, and readiness therein displayed, will be proportioned the future patronage of “writers to the signet,” who are, in fact, the wealthiest and most influential body in the Scotch metropolis.

But, from this early hour, whether employed or idle, it is expected they shall every day walk the boards till two in the afternoon ; consequently, how to pass the weary interval without perishing of *ennui* is a frequent question. However, the outer house is a place of rendezvous for all the idlers, as well as *élite* of the land ; and there are always, among the learned faculty of advocates, a number of young men, either possessed of, or heirs to, independent fortunes, who have adopted the profession without the remotest view to emolument. These gentlemen being systematically idle themselves, are

always ready to encourage idleness in others ; and they form what is technically called the stove school, from the circumstance of their congregating in winter round the fire places, where they will stand for hours together, robed in gowns and wigs, but carrying on conversation, the tone of which harmonises but awkwardly with the grave character which might be expected from such habiliments. Among them the Parliament House is voted an insufferable bore ; but attendance is persevered in from habit, and because one meets his friends and makes arrangements of pleasure for the rest of the day and the succeeding night.

After *five hours* already spent in mere idleness, not unaccompanied with fatigue, who on earth would ever think of going home to study, unless it were to dream over the pages of a novel, or, on pretext of study, to fall asleep in an elbow chair? No! mind and body are already worn out in doing nothing ; and the best way to get through the rest of the time is by a walk, or scamper on horseback into the country ; then a dinner and jollification, lasting perhaps till four in the morning. After which, the usual, however disagreeable, appearance on parade at nine, — the stove deliberations, — the scamper and dinner again.

If a young man attends the house without being actively employed in his profession, of course he runs a risk of being elected a pupil of the "stove school," and is henceforth alienated from every pursuit requiring any degree of labour or self-denial.

As might be anticipated, however, Sir Walter Scott shaped a course for himself, which differed from both. He shewed no great taste for the altercations of the bar; and the resources of his father, as to fortune, being over-rated, and calculated on the chances of a much longer life than fell to his lot, there was no immediate spur to great exertions for the sake of profit. However, he persevered in regular attendance; and, like others who were not overloaded with briefs, felt the necessity of having some better means than the Parliament House afforded to fill up his time. But his active disposition and ardent spirits protected him from the temptations of the "stove school;" and he had not been two years entered at the bar ere he began to exhibit unequivocal indications that in the words (used on another occasion) of his lamented friend, Lord Kinnedder, he was "no ordinary man."

The two main principles on which activity now hinged, were the love of military enterprise, joined with great zeal for the tory politics of

the day, and increasing fondness for literary research. By this last he contrived, most assiduously, to fill up the hours which would otherwise have been vacant, or devoted to the pursuits of the "stove school." Having derived so much enjoyment from reading, it is probable that he commenced much earlier than any one suspected to form ideas, however vague and shadowy, of contributing to the public stock of knowledge and entertainment. In order to extend his command over the world of books, he now zealously devoted his attention to the study of modern languages,—the best resource possible for a literary man who has leisure; time and patience being, for this pursuit, the grand *desiderata*. In Italian, French, and German, he made such progress as to have the power of translating even difficult authors with facility and precision; an employment in which, for several years, he greatly delighted; but to the study of grammar abstractedly, and scholastic exercises, he still entertained an aversion; consequently, never acquired a critical knowledge, or the power to speak and write correctly in any foreign tongue. As a further proof of his patience, it may be noticed, that there was scarcely one of the old French romances (no easy reading for a beginner in that language) which he did not carefully

peruse. To the Advocates' Library he had frequent recourse. However, his private collection rapidly augmented on his hands; as from earliest youth he shewed that passion for bibliography, which, in after life, was one of his distinguishing characteristics.

CHAPTER IX.

GERMAN LITERATURE — LESSING, GERSTENBERG, GOETHE,
AND KLINGER — TRANSLATION OF BALLADS, AND OF GOETZ
VON BERLICHINGEN.

BUT, as he has himself commemorated, it was the modern German literature which most powerfully attracted his attention, without the study of which, perhaps, he never would have become an author of eminence (though this was but a spark to kindle the train). At all events, the analogy and coincidence betwixt the revolution, which took place in Germany and in England with regard to works of imagination, are very remarkable. What Goethe achieved in Germany, Sir Walter Scott effected in Britain; and it must not be forgotten, that the first work, of any length, to which the latter affixed his name, was a translation of the "Goetz of Berlichingen." On the part of both authors was entertained a due respect for those models of composition which had hitherto been admired; but both doubted the propriety of considering these as the *ne plus ultra* of excellence. The French school, as they well knew, had its merits; and so had that of Dryden

and Pope in this country. It was well to imitate such powerful precursors ; nor was the literature of ancient Greece and Rome to be neglected. But all this, which had been considered quite enough for a course of poetical study, Goethe (and after him Scott) looked upon as only a commencement and foundation. Both clearly perceived, that as the delineation of characters, scenes, incidents, and emotions taken from real life, was by far the most difficult species of art, so also it was the noblest ; and that for one who had courage and perseverance to cultivate this department of literature, the field which it opened was inexhaustible.

To the dramatic writers of Germany we certainly are indebted for the first dawnings of that revolution in literary taste which soon afterwards spread through Europe ; but it is also certain, that this never would have been effected without the study of Shakespeare, and some of his contemporaries. Nor should it be forgotten, that, from early youth to his latest years, Shakespeare was the constant companion of Sir Walter Scott.

With regard to German literature, perhaps I may be excused, in this place, for repeating some paragraphs which appeared eight years ago, in a review of Klingemann's Plays. Until about 1773, when "Goetz of Berlichingen" was first published, the principles of the French school reigned

paramount in Germany ; and all those who aspired to the rank of good critics were swayed by its dogmas. But Goethe had also his precursors, who laid the foundation, whereon he afterwards reared a superstructure, the commanding character of which was soon universally acknowledged. Among the first who paved the way for this change was Lessing, a man of very powerful mind ; who, with all the critical world against him, set the example, in 1760, of writing *Bürgerliche Trauerspiele*, or, tragedies of real life, in opposition to the inane, and declamatory kings, queens, gods, and goddesses of the French. But, like other men of genius, he had a tendency to run into extremes, and thus also set the example of writing tragic dramas in prose ; a fashion which continued in Germany till twenty-five years afterwards, when Schiller decided, that blank verse was the proper medium for this kind of composition.

On the performances of Lessing immediately followed those of Gerstenberg, to whose *Ugolino* it might almost be said, that we are indebted for the works of Schiller, as it has been specially recorded of the latter, that he dated his first fervour of inspiration from the perusal of that unique, however faulty performance. Incredible as it may seem, this tragedy was many times represented on the stage ; from which, of course,

it has been long since banished. As far as I can remember, the dialogue first *commences* when Ugolino and his three sons have been already, for a considerable time, imprisoned. The varied and increasing horrors of their *last day and night* are divided by the poet into four acts, throughout which such unrivalled power is evinced, both of conception and language, and so admirable are many passages, that we read as if spell-bound; and feel almost as if it were a duty, however revolting, to contemplate, in detail, the dread realities of that story which Dante has given comparatively but in outline. In 1768, Gerstenberg also published his "Bride," a *rifacimento*, from Beaumont and Fletcher, which is included in his collected works, three vols. 8vo. 1816.

But of all Goethe's contemporaries, assuredly the individual who, next to himself and Schiller, had most influence over the public mind, was Klinger, who, when twenty-one years of age (in 1774), published his "Twin Brothers," a tragedy in prose, exhibiting scenes which, for horrid strength, are unrivalled; and to the cautious cold propriety of the French authors, and their followers, exhibits a contrast the most violent imaginable. The subject of his first play was the insane hatred and jealousy entertained by one brother against another; and though such a spectacle is revolting, the composition was unavoidably ad-

mired for its overpowering energy of style ; and was followed up with incredible rapidity, by three or four other tragedies and a comedy, all which he seems to have completed within little more than twelve months.

To Goethe's honour be it recorded, that his account of Klinger's early prowess forms one of the most eloquent and interesting eulogies that have ever been pronounced on a literary character ; and as the *laudatus a laudato viro* is entitled to respect, it may not be irrelevant to quote the following very sensible remarks, from one of Klinger's prefaces, especially as they tend to illustrate the critical spirit of the times.

“ We have had numberless complaints against the wildness and irregularity that characterise the literary productions of Germany, especially those intended for the stage ; and, to use a homely comparison, it may be said, that the process which has been gone through was like that of fermentation, without which the pure essence could not be extracted. Unquestionably, the cautious narrow rules of the French theatre, with its sonorous declamation, could not satisfy the more active, robust, and vigorous character of the Germans. He who feels not within himself a share of that spirit which led on the Romans to their wondrous victories, may write, indeed, as *correctly* as Corneille or Racine ; *but never will such an indivi-*

dual have the power of an enchanter, to bring before us men with all the real energies of life, as exemplified by Shakespeare in his Brutus, Cassius, and Coriolanus.

“In truth, the wild struggles for which we have been censured were but endeavours to find out a mode of composition suitable for us ; though, if we had been one individual nation, the case would have been widely different, and our progress in the arts and sciences would have been as regular as that of our neighbours. But why should our theatre be modelled after the French, seeing that we are Germans, and that the artificial finery of Racine’s heroes is so unsuitable to us ? or, after the *modern* English, between whose humour and ours there is also a wide difference ? A character marked by straight forward honesty, courage, perseverance, and strength, rouses the hearts of the German people, while they know not what to make of the polite Greeks and Romans of our Gallic neighbours ; and with the capricious caricatures of the modern English school, are not likely to be better pleased. Suffice it, that the simplest form is always best ; but, methinks, the Germans would rather have life, reality, and action, than listen to mere sounding declamation. It is infinitely more difficult to write one piece drawn from real life, than twenty wild productions framed out of the author’s own

brain: indeed, to the facility of such compositions must be attributed their superabundant quantity. I certainly found it much easier to compose my fantastic 'Grisaldo,' than to trace the fates of 'Conraddin.'"

So much for those by whom Goethe was preceded, or in his early efforts accompanied. In the year 1773, having already gained considerable reputation by his "Werther," he came before the public with his "Goetz of Berlichingen;" and from this period may be dated the first general manifestation of that *perfervidum genium*, that ardent and creative spirit, which henceforth continued to exist, and spread among the Germans; and under whose influence, instead of merely indulging themselves in wild and irregular phantasies, they have left no class or style of composition unexemplified; nor is there any department in which they cannot boast of authors highly estimable and distinguished.

The effect of his first play was electrical; nor was this more than might, with certainty, have been predicted. According to the Latin adage, the greatest difficulty of art lies in its concealment; and, unquestionably, the production of a tragedy like the "Goetz," was no easy task. With infinitely more talent than Lessing or Gerstenberg, Goethe, for the first time, exhibited a dramatic work, in which not only was the prin-

cipal personage a real and well-known character in German history, but in which, without looking to the right or left, the poet had chosen that which "lay before his hero in daily life," for the sources of interest and sympathetic emotion; proving incontestably, that, by the energies of a powerful mind, such materials could be rendered, beyond comparison, more valuable than those chosen by the admirers of the French school for the subjects of their vague and sonorous declamation. The true poet ennobles and exalts his subject, while the mean imitator must have recourse to characters and situations which, by their pompous attributes, may afford him a semblance of that dignity and power in which he is himself deficient.

With his usual acuteness and the keen interest he always evinced for any new productions of genius, Mr. Henry Mackenzie had, in 1798, read a paper in the Edinburgh Royal Society on the modern literature of Germany; and it was enough for Scott to know, that there were plays and poems worth reading, in order to make him a zealous member of a small club, who agreed to study German under the instruction of Dr. Willich, a medical gentleman of considerable repute, who spent some time in Scotland, and published a treatise "on Diet and Regimen," "Elements of Kantesian Philosophy," &c. The doctor ear-

nestly wished to make his pupils *au fait* of what he called the "*geheimnissvolle tiefe*" (mysterious depth) of his native language, which, as he well knew, could only be mastered by patient submission to grammatical exercises. According to his own statement, Scott's idleness made him the laughing-stock of his companions: but it may, of course, be doubted, whether he has given a just account of his own progress; for without labour and attention he could not have acquired that power of reading German which he retained in after life.

Among his fellow-students, Mr. John Macfarlane, advocate, always received high praise for his patience and assiduity, while Dr. Willich predicted, that Mr. Scott would never succeed, as he determined at once to come to the superstructure without laying a stable foundation. The truth was, that his ambition centered in being able to understand the modern productions which Mackenzie had recommended; and he always spoke with pleasure and animation of his early German studies. A German book at Edinburgh, especially a modern one, was then a rare acquisition, and valued in proportion to its rarity. Scott, however, soon got into his possession the works, so far as they yet existed, of Goethe, Schiller, and Bürger, and "having," as he used afterwards to say, "little else to do," he very

sedulously set to work, and translated right through them; not troubling himself, at the time, to polish his versions, but content if he transferred to paper, in a broad outline, the *sense* of the author. In this way I believe he not only went through the prose plays of Goethe and Schiller, but even some of the now forgotten romances of Spiess, *then* an eminent manufacturer for the Minerva press of Germany. Among these I have heard him speak with peculiar interest of the "Petermünchen," a production of *diablerie*, which his own genius had probably invested with interest, such as no other reader could have discovered in it.

In Bürger's "Lenora," and "Wild Huntsman," he found ballads, of which the tone was quite after his own heart, and assimilated with his early impressions and reveries at Smayholme Tower; and, as is well known, a version of these ballads formed his first publication. But there is every reason to believe, that the "Goetz of Berlichingen" had more influence in disposing his mind for the course which he afterwards pursued, than any other production, either foreign or domestic, which fell in his way. His other translations, undertaken merely to fill up leisure time, and to acquire a knowledge of German, were suffered to lie neglected as mere exercises and waste paper; but *this* having paramount attractions, was cor-

rected and published with his name. This tragedy, indeed, affords a kind of type and example of that species of composition by which Scott afterwards acquired such unrivalled distinction. Here, at least, was a real and well-known historical hero of the olden time,—a man whose character was so far from being fabulous, that he has left his own very curious autobiography,—and without the slightest departure from the realities of life, brought out in a manner, till then, unprecedented in modern art. We may well suppose, that, during the task of turning the play into English, Scott, reflecting on his own treasures of historical knowledge, which were already ample, and firmly fixed in his mind, may, like Corregio, have exclaimed, *Anch' io sono pittore!* and may, in his reveries, have seen starting up into life those characters which he afterwards so powerfully, and with such perfect originality, delineated.

SECTION II.

HIS EARLY MANHOOD.

CHAPTER I.

GOETHE'S "EGMONT"—M. G. LEWIS—EARLY BALLADS—DUKE
OF BUCCLEUCH—PRESIDENT BLAIR—LORD MELVILLE.

BEFORE quitting the subject of German literature, it should have been remarked, that Goethe's succeeding tragedy of "Egmont" is a production of a similar class, and was calculated to deepen the impression already produced on Scott's mind by "Goetz of Berlichingen." I have heard it remarked, that in the romance of "Kenilworth," some of the scenes bear so close a resemblance to those of "Egmont," that this might be supposed the effect of imitation. If so, it may be an accidental coincidence of story, or an effect of memory; but, assuredly, no writer was ever more free from the imputation of borrowing than Sir Walter Scott. Had he continued his German studies, the enormous stock of fictions, as

well as of historical and antiquarian learning, which exist in that language, might indeed have supplied materials to work upon, which would have saved him trouble, and undergone, in his hands, a transmutation like that of lead into gold. But I doubt whether his reading in the languages extended much beyond those volumes which he translated before the year 1800. The works of Goethe and Schiller acted like a spark,—or say rather a torch,—kindling up his own genius, which found ample materials in the old ballads and historical records of his own country; and being once excited, required no further aid from foreign sources. In truth, after Sir Walter Scott became actively engaged in authorship, he every year read less and less. As in the early part of his life, until the age of twenty-five or thirty, he did little else but read; in his latter years, he was so unremittingly engaged in writing, that reading no longer afforded his mind sufficient excitement.

One of his earliest friends, whose example induced him to try his powers in literature, was the eccentric Matthew G. Lewis, whose clever ballads, and romance entitled the "Mouk," unequivocally modelled from German sources, had made him an object of notoriety, which, however, was considerably increased by the circumstances of his being possessed of a fair fortune in the West Indies, moving in fashionable circles, and

having a seat in parliament. No one could proceed more cautiously than Sir Walter Scott in his first attempts at authorship. So little confidence did he then place in his own powers, that it was not without hesitation he entertained the idea of being able to approach the rank of Monk Lewis, as a composer of ballads; but, by the approbation cordially bestowed on his "Glenfinlas," and "Eve of St. John," he found, perhaps, to his surprise, that he had underrated his own capacity in that respect.

I have observed, that the interest he took in the politics of the day, combined with literary research, formed the main springs on which his activity was kept up, and which prevented him from assimilating with the idle members of the *Stove School*. If his wishes as to becoming professionally a soldier could not be gratified, it was at least in his power to "*play at soldiering*,"—an amusement into which he entered with the utmost enthusiasm and fervour, when, in the year 1797, he became an officer under the banners of the Royal Mid-Lothian Regiment of Cavalry. At this period he cemented a cordial friendship, which endured through life, with several very eminent public characters, who were also zealous adherents of the Tory government; especially his noble kinsman the Duke of Buccleuch; Mr. Blair, afterwards President of the Court of Session; and Henry Dundas, afterwards Lord Melville.

If Scott, according to his own words (*vide* p. 6), had gained no ground in life which was not "hard won" by his own exertions, yet in his friendships, he assuredly was fortunate, especially with those three individuals. Every one who remembers the Duke of Buccleuch in 1797, will be ready to characterise him as a model of a nobleman,—by his activity, his regular habits of business, his buoyant jovial spirit, his princely generosity, and zeal to do good without ostentation, ennobling the rank which he held, instead of depending on that rank for distinction. And, in regard to this ancient family, the remark which is so seldom applicable, must not be omitted; namely, that their talents and virtues have not been, as is too often the case, confined to *one* representative of the house, but become in effect, like their fortunes, *hereditary*. With regard to President Blair, had it not been for the assiduity with which he devoted himself to a laborious profession, there is little doubt that he would have become eminent as an author. Overloaded as he was during his practice at the bar with a multiplicity of business, he yet found time for literature; and during the vacation, always recurred with even juvenile vivacity and ardour to his favourite studies. Among the President's peculiarities, it may be observed, that he could not trifle or dawdle with

any subject, but would *unconsciously* exert the whole strength of the elephant in moving a go-cart; an illustration, however fantastic, which will not be misunderstood by those who knew him, and remember with what degree of labour and research (sometimes far more than was necessary) he grappled with every subject. Afterwards, and during the *first few days* of the vacation, he would set himself as energetically *to do nothing*; that is to say, to read "Don Quixote," "Gulliver's Travels," "Tristram Shandy," and "Humphry Clinker," which, from the mere effect of contrast, and his own vivid perceptions, always brought with them the zest of novelty. It was said of poor Maturin, that, when busily engaged in composition, he always stuck a black wafer on his forehead, which indicated to his family that he must on no account be disturbed. The induction of a night-cap was Mr. Blair's invariable signal that a difficult case was on hand, and that no idler must dare to approach him.

Between the character of Scott and that of Blair, there existed indeed some strong points of resemblance. There appeared in both a great command of temper, with a constitution naturally irritable; the same contempt for obstacles, such as would have appalled most other men; the same unconquerable spirit in the fulfilment of

duties once undertaken; whilst, also, in their eccentricities, particularly that of absence of mind (or abstraction), there was an affinity. This, indeed, was more remarkable in Blair than in Scott, of which the latter used to mention a ludicrous instance. On coming out of his house one day, in George's Square, he was met by a stranger, who touched his hat, and, with seeming familiarity, marched up to the threshold. "What do you want, sir?" said the judge, rather sternly. "My lord," answered the stranger, "I come to call for *Mr. Thamson!*" "Mr. *Thamson!*" repeated his lordship; "this is my house, and my name happens to be Blair. Go about your business, sir!" "My lord, I beg pardon; Mr. *Thamson* is your lordship's clerk." "Good God!" said the judge, *sotto voce*, and stalking away, "is *that man's* name Thompson?" The clerk had been tolerated by him twenty years or more, though distinguished for stupidity; and answering, probably, to the familiar appellation of James or Saunders, his proper name had been wholly forgotten. *Non erat tanti viri.*

But of all friends whom, at this early period, Scott had acquired, none was more steadfast and congenial than the late Viscount Melville, and none approved more cordially of that spirit which he evinced in drilling the Mid-Lothian cavalry corps. It should be noticed, that at this

period of his life, as, indeed, for the following thirty years, the author of "Waverley" was gifted with great vivacity and buoyancy of spirits. His constitution promised to be robust and long enduring; and he was equally ready at all times for the sports and labours of the field, or the industrious labours of authorship. In regard to these last, he had not yet adopted that system of early rising, for which he was remarkable in latter years, but would sometimes continue his studies through the whole night, without being inconvenienced by it, or suffering fatigue on the following day.

CHAPTER II.

YEOMANRY SERVICE — EARLY ATTACHMENT — MARRIAGE —
WORLDLY PRUDENCE — LIBRARY IN CASTLE STREET — COT-
TAGE AT LASSWADE — HOSPITALITY.

IN whatever Sir Walter Scott undertook, excepting, perhaps, the management of pecuniary affairs, there appeared the same peculiarity of disposition and talents, only turned into a different channel, which he exhibited in his writings. As to the discipline of a troop of yeomanry, those only who have served in one can appreciate how much of patience, ingenuity, and application, is required before any respectable appearance will be made on a field-day. If the French had been actually off the coast, Quarter-master Scott could not have shewn more alertness and spirit than he now did in drilling both horses and men, of which many whimsical instances might be recorded. With all this enthusiasm, he had opportunities enough of indulging that keen sense of the ludicrous which accompanied him through life, though he never made a really ill-natured joke at the expense of any one. With this vein of comic humour, it is

almost needless to observe, that he was a superlative companion in the mess-room, where his unaffected cheerfulness, and boundless store of anecdote, often set the table in a roar.

There was once a story current of Sir Walter being, in early age, deeply attached to a lady of great beauty and high rank; which *liaison*, as the "tide of true love never did run smooth," ended in disappointment, preyed on his spirits, and gave, for some time, a recklessness to his feelings which might have influenced him to plunge deeply into literary research by way of a sedative. I know not whether there is any foundation of truth for this rumour.

In 1797, after a ramble through the beautiful scenery of the Cumberland lakes, he happened to stay for some time at Gills-land, which had then some celebrity as a northern watering-place. Such places of resort are celebrated for match-making, and he here became acquainted with Miss Charpentier, whom he speedily afterwards married.

* * * * *

Through life Sir Walter Scott imagined himself a *prudent* man; I have said *imagined*, because his innate kindness of heart and generosity, his literary abstraction, his boundless hospitality, love of architecture and landscape gardening, old books, pictures, and antiquities, were all at war with what is usually termed prudence.

“For *one* step uphill,” as he sometimes observed, “there were *three* downwards.” His resources were multifarious; his skill, sagacity, and perseverance, in turning them to the best account, were worthy of the highest admiration; and, having accomplished much as a financier in acquiring money, which occasionally was *showered* upon him, he perhaps determined also to become a rigid disciplinarian in repelling attacks upon his purse; but the barriers he raised against expenditure were easily broken down, and to become avaricious was wholly impossible. Yet, ere dismissing this point, let it be remembered that, had it not been for accommodation bills, drawn or endorsed to support the credit of his bookseller, Sir Walter Scott would never have known any real pecuniary difficulties. Were it not for the *multiplied* evils which arose out of that *one* error or misfortune, he might at this hour have been alive and affluent.

I believe, that if he betrayed the slightest alloy of self-conceit or vanity (than which nothing was more opposite to his character), this consisted in the idea, that though devoted to the Muses, he could yet persevere quite enough in that homage, without abating one tittle of worldly wisdom. He always disputed the notion, that a man of letters, or poet, cannot be a man of business; and, after his marriage, was an

indefatigable attendant at the parliament-house. His extreme partiality for the country, however, made him wish for some retreat out of town, in which to spend the holydays ; but at first he proceeded on a very moderate scale. His residence in North Castle Street, Edinburgh, formed, for many years, his head-quarters, and here was founded that library and collection of antiquities and armour which afterwards accumulated to great extent. The house was small, but convenient, having a quiet library in the rear, where his books were arranged in such perfect order, that he could in a moment command any volume that was required ; the dusky old covers being always retouched by his confidential binder, and blazoned with their names in gold letters. The massive library table, the trophies on the wall, the Roman lamps on the chimney-piece, the spectral figures produced by old coats of mail and hauberks placed upright,—all were in symmetry. There was no litter or confusion ; and, to prevent an accumulation of useless papers (for even the envelopes of the letters he received would, in the year, have made a waggon load!) a large round basket stood always at hand, ready to receive what Voltaire chose to denominate “foul linen.” One winter evening, when Scott happened to cram into the fire a very large manuscript, of which

he had made a fair copy, and Mr. Ballantyne, the printer, wished to take it out again, "Be quiet," said the author, "and rest assured you have got what is bad enough already; don't ask for any thing worse!" In those days he carefully transcribed his productions, and seemed to take pleasure in so doing; but latterly, it is almost superfluous to observe, that the practice was discontinued: in truth, he never even took time to read over the pages ere they were sent to the printer.

For landscape gardening, for architecture, as already mentioned, and even the interior embellishments of a house, Sir Walter Scott always shewed a peculiar taste; and no residence could come into his possession, even for a short time, without being improved. Soon after his marriage, in 1797, he chose for his summer retreat a thatched cottage in the neighbourhood of Lasswade and Roslin, close to the properties of his friends, the Duke of Buccleuch and Mr. H. Dundas of Melville. The road from Edinburgh to Lasswade crosses that tract of country which forms the opening scene of action in the "Heart of Mid Lothian." It would, indeed, be difficult to point out the cottage of Jenny Deans, so many new buildings having spread in the once lonely district of Newington and St. Leonard's; but, about half way to Roslin, there exists, on the

right, an old square tower (*white-washed*), which unquestionably *stood* in the poetical *picture* for the residence of the "Laird of Dumbiedykes." The whole road affords beautiful prospects. Passing the said Dumbiedykes, you proceed to the top of Gilmerton Hill, from whence is obtained a view of Edinburgh, which, for grandeur of outline, cannot be surpassed. Thence, descending, you soon arrive at the valley of the Esk, and village of Lasswade, which I have often thought supplied materials for the picture of "Gandersleugh," so humorously introduced in the prefaces to "Tales of my Landlord." There is the same steep hill down which the Edinburgh stage-coach approaches every evening,—the same atmosphere of quiet seclusion, which only stupified the schoolmaster, but made his usher a poet. There is, moreover, a noticeable school-house on the river side, wherein Mr. Tennant, the ingenious and learned author of "Anster Fair," for some time, enacted the humble part of "Jedediah Cleishbottom:" lastly, on a high sloping bank there are the ruins of an old church, surrounded by lofty ash-trees, which a poetic imagination might very easily convert into the remains of a venerable abbey.

Probably the happiest years of Scott were spent at this hamlet; and it might have been well for him if ambition, that "last infirmity of

noble minds," had never tempted him to change his abode. The cottage had attached to it only a few acres, comprising the diversities of a paddock for grazing, a tolerable garden, and, on the opposite side, a rising patch of waste ground, commanding a view into the beautiful valley where now stands Melville Castle. The house was neatly thatched, had a romantic appearance, and contained a good and cheerful drawing-room, of modern date, with a small and rather sombre old dining parlour, forming the ideal of a winter "snuggery." When Scott first came, the place was a neglected wilderness, but he immediately commenced his operations to render it a cottage *orné*; and it delighted him to say, that he and Mrs. Scott had executed most of their improvements with their own hands. I remember that two crooked trees, with rugged bark, had been selected to form an entrance, having their tops fastened together; thus making a rustic arch, and ivy was planted below, to twine round their shafts. From thence proceeded a carriage drive, winding round to the door of the cottage. Honey-suckle and China roses were carefully trained up its walls; and the garden soon assumed a flourishing appearance.

In Scotland, to be wanting in hospitality would indeed argue meanness of character, education, and birth; it would form a crime not excusable

even on the score of poverty. But of all men certainly none could be more hospitable than Scott. He was so even to strangers; but to friends his kindness knew no bounds: and in after years his patience was often sorely trespassed on and tried by visitors, who made their *entrée* sometimes without even the shadow of previous introduction. One day, at Abbotsford, he had been induced to parade before a tedious guest of this description, who, finding the house full of company, at length took his leave, or was bowed out. The "Great Unknown" gladly retreated to his own apartment; but, on the way, was overheard muttering to himself, "After all, I might at least have asked him to dinner!" Among other causes of his happiness at Lasswade may be reckoned, that from the narrowness of the accommodation he could not receive large parties; and if uncongenial guests did arrive, they could not, as at Abbotsford, be requested to prolong their stay.

CHAPTER III.

VISIT TO LASSWADE—SIR WALTER'S AVERSION TO DISPUTE—
PERSONAL APPEARANCE—LORD KINNEDEE—DESCRIPTION OF THE COTTAGE.

I REMEMBER, though it is like a dream, a visit to Mr. Scott during the last year of his residence at this cottage, which he felt some regret at leaving; but his appointment as sheriff had afforded a reason why he should be domiciled, for some time each year, in the county over which he exercised that office. Some rambling notices of this visit I shall venture to set down; but, at such distance of time, much cannot be expected from recollections of the conversation, which, had it been ever so pointed, I was too young to appreciate. But the truth is, that men of much inferior minds have supplied better materials for volumes of "Table Talk" than Sir Walter Scott. The leading characteristics of his conversation depended on his unaffected good humour, on the utter absence of any design to produce *effect*, either by witticisms or superiority of eloquence; for, in this respect, at a party of *soi-disant* wits, he was like a man who persists in wearing plain clothes, (or shall I say, dressing-gown and slip-

pers?) whilst others are strutting in bag-wigs and gold lace. He sought only relaxation and mirth, whilst they were aiming at ostentatious display. Somewhat on the same principle that led him to withhold his name from the Waverley novels, he also seemed rather to shun any distinction that might have been gained as a "talker," contenting himself with what Galt has called a "pleasant comicality;" and as to his excellent old stories and happy illustrations, they dropped in by mere accident as his memory supplied them, when applicable to the immediate topics of discourse. I may notice, *en passant*, one more peculiarity. As it was next to impossible to inveigle Sir Walter into a colloquial dispute, it became also scarce practicable for others to carry on an angry controversy in his presence. Some ridiculous anecdote, or *bizarre* mode of stating the question at issue, generally succeeded in making the antagonists both laugh and abandon their hostility. In this respect, Pinkerton, Ritson, and Weber, were the most unmanageable persons he ever had to deal with; but even *their* acerbity was neutralised in his presence: though poor Weber's insanity, after long and faithful service as an amanuensis, became at last too apparent to admit of his being, as usual, a guest at the table of his benefactor.

I have been invited to pass an afternoon at the

cottage, and visit whatever was remarkable in the immediate neighbourhood. At that time, I believe the principal, or I may say, only object of my ambition was, to have a volume of poems with or without my name attached to it, actually in print! With regard to the contents of the book, either in bulk or style, whether ballad, ode, or sonnet, I was not particular. A volume, containing about as much as Gray's Poems, published by a leading bookseller, would have satisfied my desires; and having accomplished this, I should have died content! Accordingly, I had elaborated a thin quarto, of about one hundred and twenty pages, with twenty lines in a page, which constituted the *magnum opus* whereon immortality was to be founded. Greater trash could scarcely exist; but Mr. Scott, who was fourteen years my senior, had the condescension to pronounce the verses "very pretty," though he doubted (well he might!) if *booksellers* would like them.

"I have no pretensions," he added, "to style myself a literary character, which would be rather an imposing title to found on the mere editorship or imitation of some old ballads.* But *this much* I can clearly understand of literary employment, especially poetry,—it is good as an *amusement*,

* The first edition of "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border" was then in the press.

but deplorable as a *profession*. Fortunately, however, you have it in your power to woo the Muse without needing to consider whether she has any *tocher* ;* and as to the guerdon of praise, it is far the best way to look on it as of no consequence. The man who writes well, generally has a pleasure in writing, which alone is a recompense ; and with regard to obtaining the favour of booksellers, or of the public, it is a mere lottery, in which, as in other lotteries, those probably fare the best who think least about the chances."

I have admitted some egotism, only to shew in what character I was first introduced to the "Great Unknown," who, at that period, was equally unknown as a great genius, even to himself. In a very beautiful morning of October I rode out, fully occupied in mind with anticipations of a delightful visit ; for I had discrimination enough to perceive, that, as a literary acquaintance, Mr. Scott deserved to be held in high regard, whilst his buoyant spirits and unaffected manners rendered him a favourite in all circles. On arriving at the heights above Lasswade, I thought it the most beautiful village I had ever seen. The landscape is well wooded, and finely diversified ; the small river Esk assumes, in its windings, many picturesque forms ; there is a

* Dowry.

neat village church, with white spire; and the whole scene has an aspect of peacefulness, serenity, and prosperity, not often to be met with in villages near Edinburgh.

Not knowing which was the house, I descended the valley, intending to put up at the inn, and inquire my way, when a servant in livery, of whom I had no remembrance, came up, and touching his hat with an air somewhat *en militaire*, asked if he should take my horse to the stables. Probably his recollection of me, as a visitor in Castle Street, was clearer than mine of the domestics; and having pointed out the cottage, instead of mounting the pony, he led it away down hill, as respectfully as if it had been the charger of a king.

Every step within or near the abode of an eminent man is interesting. I had read, with great admiration, all the verses which Scott had then produced, including *unpublished* ballads; and, though without any prophetic notions, felt convinced that I was on a visit to no ordinary character. Turning off from the highway, I entered a cart-track or bye-road, betwixt hawthorn hedges, now profusely covered with the red and ripening fruits of autumn, and soon reached the entrance-gate, betwixt the two crooked trees already mentioned, which are visible at the present day, but stripped of their

bark by the weather. I had scarcely got through it, when an angry and sonorous voice excited some momentary apprehensions for personal safety. It was that of a large dog of uncommon breed, with a head like a mastiff's, who came up at first very ferociously, and with the eye of an examining *douanier*. It appeared, however, that he, like the servant, had some grounds of *reconnoissance*, and decided that I was not *contre-bande*; for his growls were soon exchanged for playful gambols, and he scampered before me, looking back with raised eyebrows and a joyful expression, as if he would have said, "Come along; this is the way!" I followed him, till we came opposite the drawing-room windows and the little peaceful meadow, in which a poney and cow were grazing. I was struck with the exceeding air of neatness that prevailed around: the hand of tasteful cultivation had been there, and all methods employed to convert an ordinary thatched cottage into a handsome and comfortable abode. The door-way was an angle formed by the original old cabin, and the additional rooms which had been built to it. In a moment I had passed through the lobby, and found myself in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Scott, and Mr. William Erskine, afterwards Lord Kinnecker.

At this early period, Scott was, in appearance,

much more like the portrait by Saxon, (with the favourite large dog *Camp*), engraved for the first edition of the "Lady of the Lake," than to any subsequent picture. He retained, in features and form, an impress of that elasticity and youthful vivacity which he used to complain wore off after he was forty; and, by *his own* account, was exchanged for the plodding heaviness of an opiose student. He had now, indeed, somewhat of a boyish gaiety of look; and in person was tall, slim, and extremely active. Through life he possessed that remarkable mutability of countenance which occasioned much discrepancy in the productions of his portrait painters. It was very possible that half a dozen pictures might resemble the original, and yet be very unlike one to another. This is particularly noticeable in the two portraits painted at different dates by the late Sir H. Raeburn; of which the first is much the best, though greater care was bestowed on the second.

This reminds me of what once occurred at the rooms of an eminent artist, who, at the fourth sitting, declared himself at fault, and that he could not bring out the expression which he wished to convey.

"Why, what the deuce would you have?" answered Scott, "I am sure your production is only too good for such a subject."

“ There, — it came back again for a moment,” said the artist; “ but, no; it is not yet perfect.”

Meanwhile, a stentorian voice was heard among visitors in the adjoining exhibition-room; and Scott, who well knew the comical character of the speaker, observed, “ Hah! there is honest Jack Fuller.”

“ *Eureka,*” cried the artist, “ that is precisely what I wanted. *Now* I have caught it, and am content.”

The *original* bust in marble, at Chantrey’s, exhibits accurately the kind of expression which Jack Fuller’s oddities must have excited; but it is much enfeebled in the ordinary plaster copies.

To return. On my entrance, Mr. Scott was seated at a table near the window, and occupied in transcribing from an old manuscript volume into his common-place book. As to costume, he was carelessly attired in a widely made shooting-dress, with a coloured handkerchief round his neck; the very antithesis of style usually adopted either by a student or barrister.

Yet a few words on the common-place book. Never did any one, in appearance, enjoy so much leisure, and economise time so profitably, as the author of “*Waverley.*” Quietly, yet I suspect with great inward enthusiasm and delight, he collected, under particular heads and classes, such extracts or traditions as might afterwards enliven

the dark page of history, or give a strength, vitality, and *vraisemblance* to his original productions, which mere imagination, without learning, could not possibly afford. I cannot say whether the system of a common-place book was regularly persevered in; for he had peculiar modes of assisting his memory, which would have been of no use to any one else; but, for example, it may be noticed, that he had written, at this time, many pages of *notanda*, directly or indirectly connected with the fate of John, Master of St. Clair, who was exiled for his share in the Rebellion of 1715, and took temporary refuge at Kirkwall, in Orkney, where his ancestors had once large property, and a princely castle. Of these I am not aware that any use was made, except what appears in the notes to the "Lay of the Last Minstrel."

I was received with the utmost cordiality.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "welcome, thrice welcome! for we are just now proposing to have lunch, and then a long, long walk through wood and wold, in which I am sure you will join us. But no man can thoroughly appreciate the pleasure of such a life who has not known, by experience, what it is to rise spiritless in a morning, and dawdle out half the day in the Parliament House, where we must all *compear* within another fortnight; then to spend the rest of one's time

in applying proofs to *condescendences*, and drawing out papers to bamboozle judges, most of whom are *daized* enough already. What say you, Counsellor Erskine?"

Not one syllable did this gentleman utter in reply. He had just laid down the newspaper, taken a huge pinch of snuff from a *mull*, which the Reverend Dr. Jameson had forgotten on the previous day, and sat staring at the window. Lord Kinnedder was remarkable for abstraction of mind and taciturnity; that is to say, he would not speak at all unless when roused by some subject which interested him, and he could then become very eloquent. He had great enjoyment in literature; but, with regard to his own compositions, was so exceedingly fastidious, that this, independently of his professional labours at the bar, would have been sufficient to prevent him from appearing much as an author. He read, however, with intense interest; and of books was so tenacious, that, with the exception of a dictionary of decisions, his library always remained under lock and key, and within cases with close fronts, so that no one could see the contents, and thus be tempted to borrow a volume; whereas Scott, in regard to books, always freely borrowed and lent. With an appearance of much quietude and good nature, Erskine had a great share of that irritable temperament which

often accompanies poetical talent ; and of poetry he was a most acute and excellent judge. Merit he would carefully discover, and kindly applaud, even in the most humble aspirant ; but, wo to the author who imagined that he would skip over inaccuracies, and be lenient to faults ! He was an excellent reader and reciter of verses ; and, conscious that he produced good effect, very willingly officiated in this way. On no other friend as a critic did Scott rely so much as on Erskine ; and many times even whole pages of poetry, after being transcribed for the press, were entirely recomposed at the suggestion of this fastidious but kind adviser.

Ere proceeding further, let a few words be devoted to the interior of the cottage at Lasswade. With a mind almost perpetually active, while, to superficial observers, he might seem a trifler, the author of "Waverley" soon gave a new appearance to every place of which he chanced to be the tenant. He might be employed *delving* in his garden, or knocking nails with pieces of cloth into the wall, to train the shrubs and fruit trees ; he might be cleaning his gun, binding his own books, or arranging anti-*quities*. Yet these occupations did not interrupt, but rather assisted pursuits worthy to be called intellectual.

Old books, pictures, and manuscripts ; armour,

costume, and implements of all sorts, seemed to be with him necessaries of life; and they accumulated wherever he went, like plants and stones with the botanist and geologist; though, instead of contributing merely to science, such collections gave rise, in his hands, to new creations out of old materials, or, I might say, to the production of new life. It was not enough to have the "hunting-bottle" of King James VI. as an object of curiosity, but the *rex pacificus* must be himself evoked to appear once more before the eyes of the world in most amusing *propria personâ*. The temporary cell at Lasswade was not, of course, without its antiquarian adornments; and in a recess of one of the windows stood a painter's lay figure, supporting a coat of mail, and having arms and hands, in one of which was placed, fantastically, the remnant of an old rusty sword. Over the marble chimneypiece, too, there was a trophy composed of an authentic old high-land shield, with various swords, arrows, daggers, and other weapons, which the owner delighted to say were as old as the times of Robin Hood.

CHAPTER IV.

WALK TO ROSLIN—OLD CASTLES—MAJOR WEIR—THOUGHTS
ON ROMANCE-WRITING—CAVE AT GORTHY.

“WHAT makes you so grave, Counsellor?” said Mr. Scott, again addressing his friend Erskine. “Come, *alla guerra!* rouse, and say whether you are for a walk to day.”

“Certainly; in such fine weather I don’t see what we can propose better. It is the last I shall see of the country this vacation.”

“Nay, say not so, man;* we shall all be merry twice and once yet before the evil days arrive.”

“I’ll tell you what I have thought of this half-hour; it is a plan of mine to rent a cottage and cabbage garden; not here, but somewhere further out of town,—perhaps in Ettrick Forest—and never again, after this one session, to enter the Parliament House.”

* The reader must imagine as he best can the comic half-theatrical tone with which the phraseology of Shakespeare and other old writers was introduced by the author of “Waverley,” in ordinary conversation. To some people it will seem odd; but I cannot help this.

“ And you will ask Ritson, perhaps, to stay with you, and help to consume the cabbages ?* But those who *talk* of running away from duty are not always the first to do so. A profession may not be very pleasant ; but one takes it ‘ for better and worse ;’ and it must never be abandoned. I maintain stoutly my determination to abide by the Parliament House, yet am more likely to fling up my gown and briefs than you are. Rest assured, however, we shall both sit on the bench one day ! but, heigh ho ! we shall both have turned very old and philosophical by that time. Instead of ballads, I shall, perhaps, be writing treatises, like Monboddo, on the origin of languages, or to prove that men should have tails, varied now and then with an edifying new tractate on the law of entail.”

“ Did you not expect Lewis here this morning ?”

“ Lewis, I venture to say, is not up yet, for he dined at Dalkeith House yesterday, and, of course, found the wine very good. Besides, you know, I have entrusted him with Finella, till his own steed gets well of a sprain ; and he would not join our walking excursion. I see you are admiring that rusty sword,” he added, addressing

* Alluding to Ritson, the antiquary’s, abhorrence of animal food, respecting which he published a treatise.

me; "and your interest would increase if you knew how much labour was required to bring it into my possession. In order to grasp that mouldering weapon, I was obliged to drain the well at the castle of Dunnottar."

"Is Dunnottar Castle worth seeing?" inquired Erskine.

"Worth seeing, indeed! as if it were not worth travelling five hundred instead of one hundred miles to see. Why, Counsellor, we must go there together next spring. We shall find an Aberdeen smack at Leith,—no, a Shetland vessel homeward bound for Lerwick would be best, because we can afterwards visit Shetland also; and we shall make an agreement with the captain to set us on shore at Dunnottar, and stay there for a whole week if we should wish to do so. Were I proprietor of the castle, how proud should we be of such a residence! The walls are stout enough; and, by degrees, I should renovate every apartment, keeping up all the gloomy grandeur of old times, without losing sight of modern comfort. I can resist the temptation of my neighbour's ox or ass, but there is no object that makes some people so covetous as an old castle. And there you shall see, not only the well which I drained, but the celebrated Whigs' vault, with remnants of the iron staples, stanchions, and chains, with which the poor devils were fastened to the wall.

How would the selfish, cautious, cowardly crew of modern Whigs like such treatment? But it is time to set out; and here is *one* friend," addressing himself to the large dog, "who is very impatient to be on the field; he tells me that he knows where to find a hare in the woods at Mairsbank. And here is another," caressing the terrier, "who longs to have a battle with the weasels and water-rats, and with the *foumart* that 'wons in a glen,' near the caves of Gorthy. So let us be off."

Mr. Scott and his friend passed the time on the way to Roslin in a political discussion on the events of the times, of which so little interest did I then take in politics, that I scarcely remember one sentence. At length we came to a high jutting point of rock, from which, on one side, is commanded a beautiful view into the valley of the Esk; and on another are seen, for the first time, the ruins of Roslin Castle and its chapel.

"Now, though we are accustomed to all this, Erskine," observed Scott, "we must allow our young friend to pause, ponder, and admire. I suspect, also, that a rest here will be very agreeable to all of us. Yonder, sir, you behold the far-famed chapelle, founded in 1446, by the powerful William St. Clair, which, whatever we modern critics may think of it, was not finished

without the aid of an architect who had travelled to Rome, and throughout all Europe, to learn the deeper mysteries of his vocation, and give the proper embellishments to its interior. It is one of the few remnants of antiquity on which our great champion of the Scottish church did not exercise his peculiar plans of reformation. There you shall shortly tread on the pavement under which twenty of the bold barons of Roslin are laid in their armour; and, as you are fond of ghosts, I dare say we could make a bargain for you with the portress of the chapel, that, if so inclined, you might be allowed to pass a night there, and try whether any of those cavaliers, haply troubled by an evil conscience, is in the habit of walking at the spectral hour."

"If you are going into the chapel," said Erskine, "I must insist that the horrid old woman with the stick may not be suffered to enter it. Give her the money she expects, if you will; but let her be paid for holding her tongue, not for speaking."

"Why, Counsellor, she would fling the money at our heads; and, perhaps, lay the stick across our shoulders, if we dared to make such a proposition. There is a pleasure in the song which none but the songstress knows; and, by telling her that we are acquainted with it already, we should only make the poor creature unhappy:

and wherefore should we do this only to relieve ourselves from a little trial of patience? Reflect, also, what place is so fit for penance as a Roman Catholic chapel; and thank your stars, that you are not obliged to pray for hours or weeks together on the cold stones, and live on pease meal and water for the expiation of your sins."

I must say that Scott did not afterwards practise as he preached; but, with almost boyish drollery, interrupted the old woman's explanations, starting doubts, and correcting blunders, till her indignation was fiercely roused.

"Owe, ay!" she said, "it's like eneuch that *you, indeed*, a wild young chap, should ken better than me that 's lived a' my days at the place, and learned the stories as they are delivered down frae father to son, and frae mither to dochter!"

"I wish we knew more than we are ever likely to do of the powerful family that once owned this castle and chapel," said Scott, in a reflective tone. "Doubtless there were beautiful damsels, as well as belted knights, that now 'sleep the sleep that knows no waking' under these cold stones; anxious, of course, were the days and hours which they spent within these castle-walls; intricate and hazardous the adventures in which they were engaged.

A chronicle of Roslin, or any other old castle of consideration ; that is to say, a minute record of the lives of its various inhabitants, how they fought and caroused, loved and hated, worked and played, would be worth more than all the mere romances that ever were penned, as a fund of amusement and instruction. But we have only vague outlines ; imagination must do the rest."

" Yet, as to the Sinclairs, you have considerable evidence already," observed Erskine.

" Scarcely enough for a *condescendence* to go into court with," replied Scott. " Why, we are adopting parliament-house language for every thing ! Yes, of a family so highly connected and so powerful, we must have evidence. The founder of this chapel, with his endless string of titles, his princely castle in the Orkneys, and his alleged immorality of conduct, is not easily to be forgotten. But, on the whole, how little more do we learn from history, than that Sir William lived and ruled at one time, and Sir John at another, while of the fair dames little or nothing is said ! We find their names in long lists, it is true, and as having assisted on certain public occasions of war or pageantry. But the poet must either discover or invent far more than this. He requires to know their individual habits of life, their wants, wishes, and

springs of action. In truth, we know far more about Major Weir and his enchanted staff, than about any of the Roslin barons and baronesses ; and if I were ever to become a writer of prose romances, I think I would choose him, if not for my hero, at least for an agent and leading one in my production."

"The Major was a disgusting fellow, however," said Erskine. "I never could look at his history a second time. A most ungentlemanlike character !"

"True ; but remember you judge only by what his enemies have said of him : it is an *ex parte* statement. We are informed that he lived in the West Bow, and occasionally gave the utmost annoyance to his neighbours by the *eldritch* laughter, and other noises, that arose in his house at midnight ; and by the hobgoblins that appeared, not only at the windows, but stalking along the streets to and from his mansion. He is, of course, represented as a public nuisance ; and the foulest possible accusations, over and above that of dealing with the devil, are superadded. We know all this ; and I am afraid we know, also, that he was burned alive not much more than a hundred years ago, and his staff along with him ; which was rather severe retributive justice for allowing the tall woman with three heads, or without a head, to parade

the streets, or permitting his devilish companions to laugh at midnight: and would those who burned him, or approved of his being burned, represent him as a gentleman? Certainly not. But all this does not afford any sufficient reason why a poet or novelist should not introduce him as a highly intelligent, well-educated personage, who had before signalised himself in the wars; and, as Dogberry says, "had losses." Though he dealt with the devil, and the hobgoblins came about him, why should we set him down for an ungentlemanly fellow, unless we could have his own statements also (which, rely on it, have been suppressed), and knew the motives for his actions at least as well as we know those of Dr. Faustus?"

From Roslin Chapel we went almost immediately, by a wooden bridge, across the river, to visit a certain cave which was a favourite with Scott in those days, though it is only an insignificant one among many which exist in Scotland similar to that in which the "Barons of Bradwardine" took refuge. It enters from the front of a precipitous cliff, is cut into the solid rock in the form of a cross; that is to say, has one apartment of considerable size, with two niches, or recesses. Like other places of the same kind, it is concealed from observation by overhanging thickets of wild-wood; nor can it be

reached without clinging to the branches, either in mounting or descending. We descended: and here an accident occurred which might have had serious results. We came along in safety till we stood close to the cave; but, in turning to enter it, Scott made a sort of leap, which his lameness rendered ineffectual, missed his footing, and fell down the precipice. Had there been no trees in the way, he must have been severely injured; but, mid-way, he was stopped by a large root of hazel, where, instead of struggling, which would have made matters greatly worse, he seemed perfectly resigned to his fate, and slipped through the tangled thicket till he lay flat on the river's bank. All this was so alarming, that I could not help uttering a loud exclamation. "Never mind," said Erskine, "I am certain he is not hurt;" and, accordingly, Scott rose in an instant from his recumbent position; and, with a hearty laugh, called out, "Now, let me see who else will do the like!" He scrambled up the cliff with alacrity, and entered the cave, where we had a long dialogue.

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CHAPTER V.

DINNER PARTY—MR. JOHN LEYDEN—RITSON, THE ANTI-
QUARY—PLAYFULNESS OF MANNER—REMARKS ON IN-
SANITY—ANECDOTES OF THE LATE LORD K——.—PRO-
POSED RAID OF ROSLIN.

ON our return to the cottage, we found the party increased by the arrival, in our absence, of Mr. John Leyden, and a gentleman of grave and formal manners, whom I never saw before nor since, and named (I believe) Mr. Macritchie.

I have already noticed Scott's friendly disposition to patronise and assist meritorious aspirants to literary distinction; and, among his young acquaintances and fellow-students of old manuscripts and border traditions, Leyden, notwithstanding his *bizarre* manners, was, perhaps, of all the most congenial and deserving. He had boundless enthusiasm for Scottish characters of the olden time, for Scottish music, poetry, and scenery, for hard study in every department; and to all his undertakings applied himself with a degree of ardour which no difficulties, complexity, nor even danger, could extinguish. His favourite principle was, that difficulties exist but

for the bold and persevering to conquer ; and in a humble department, that of transcribing from books and manuscripts in the Advocates' Library, he cheerfully rendered Scott good service ; indeed, could have written sixteen hours per day, without once complaining of the drudgery. Fatigue, he maintained, was a feeling which entirely depended on the mind, and over which the mind ought to triumph. Probably no one ever left his own country, as a professional man in search of fortune, with more acute emotions of regret than Leyden ; and this he has beautifully expressed in subsequent poems. His unconquerable spirit proved, at last, the indirect cause of his untimely end ; for the severe application to which he subjected himself, in his oriental studies, no doubt weakened his frame, and rendered him less able to contend with the malady that attacked him when on duty in the pestilential island of Java. But of personal fear, or even caution, he seemed at all times nearly insensible.

On our arrival, Scott inquired what had become of the learned cabbage-eater, meaning Ritson, whom he had expected to dinner.

" Indeed, you may be rejoiced that he is not here," answered Mrs. Scott, " he is so very disagreeable. Mr. Leyden, I believe, frightened him away."

Leyden then described, with some asperity,

what had occurred. About two o'clock, when Ritson made his appearance, a cold round of beef was on the table, of which Mrs. Scott inadvertently offered him a slice, and the antiquary, in his indignation against the use of animal food, had expressed himself in such outrageous terms to the lady, that Leyden first tried to correct him by ridicule, and on the madman becoming more violent, grew angry in his turn, till at last (Mrs. S. having left the room) he threatened, if his antagonist were not quiet, he would "thraw his neck," which, I almost believe, he would have done. Scott shook his head at this recital, as if he did not much approve of Leyden's conduct, any more than that of the other party; which the former observing, grew vehement in his own justification. Scott said not a word in reply, but took up a large bunch of feathers, tied to a stick for dusting pictures, and shook it about the student's head and ears, till he laughed, then changed the subject. This might seem unworthy of repetition, yet, by those who were acquainted with the illustrious subject of these *memoranda*, it will, however insignificant, be recognised as strictly in keeping with that playfulness of manner and aversion to dispute which I have already mentioned.

This reminds me of a remark, which will be appreciated as being made in the same gentle

spirit. In allusion to an unfortunate *littérateur* (since dead), who contrived to live in a perpetual worry of apprehension, and was a *malade imaginaire*, Scott once observed to me,—

“That poor man, I fear, will end in actually producing all the misfortunes which he is so desirous to avoid. I have tried every means to divert his mind, but in vain. He is a living proof of our adage, that ‘those who seek freits find them.’ I could verily believe, that if a mere child attacked him with a drawn sword, he would run against the blade, instead of *putting it gently aside, as we should always do with the minor, and, if possible, with all the greater evils of life.*”

To return. Dinner was plainly and unostentatiously, yet elegantly served, and our entertainer made every one happy by the mere influence of that good-humoured drollery which appeared natural to him, and of which the effect depended more on the tone and manner than the words. Some allusion being again made to Ritson, “it has been truly said,” observed Mr. Scott, “that no question is more puzzling than how to draw the line of demarcation between downright madness and those aberrations which are the effect of mere eccentricity. Every mortal, I suspect, is vacillating betwixt good sense and folly; and it is, of course, much easier to be foolish than wise. But such *more* than half crazy

characters are very inconvenient in the world. One is always kept in a state of suspense, and inclined to ask, not without some apprehension, 'What will they do next?' Yet, with myself alone, Ritson never gets *quite* off the hinge; for his thoughts are occupied with subjects which he understands well enough, and pursuits in which his industry and *microscopic* accuracy can render good service."

"He is himself an *insect!*" interposed Leyden.

"Well, never mind! I was only going on to say, that, excepting some needless abuse of other copiators and collators, he steers clear of the quicksands of insanity, and fixes his attention on the proper mark. Now, if it were possible to keep mad people always occupied with the only employments which they are fit for, this, of course, would be an effectual method of rendering them both quiet and useful."

"But this not being possible, they ought to be locked up," replied Leyden.

"Very true; only they don't like it," answered Scott; "but with so much nonsensical irritability, and that fatal symptom, groundless suspicion of all the world, I am convinced Ritson will end in a madhouse.* Nothing oversets the

* This prediction was at last realised.

balance of reason sooner than the notion, that one is watched from all quarters, and every where looked upon with an evil eye."

On this topic the discourse was kept up for some time, Scott animadverting on the power which madmen possessed of resisting their own morbid propensities, and behaving with unexceptionable propriety, as long as they could be prevailed on to *take the trouble* of so doing; also on the acuteness which they frequently shewed in detecting the follies of others. "It is odd enough," he remarked, "that a mere maniac will sometimes give advice to a brother patient as wisely and sensibly as the best man of business, moralist, or physician, could possibly do." He then introduced an anecdote of a certain nobleman in the north of Scotland, who was liable to fits of mental aberration, though at other times remarkable for discrimination and shrewdness. In early life, this individual had been in the army, had lived much at foreign courts, and was very dignified in his manners. On one occasion, his lordship became greatly excited, and so unmanageable, that his household and family were much alarmed. In this emergency, they luckily found, in the neighbouring village, an old soldier of respectable appearance, who, being instructed how to play his part, and grandly accoutred in military costume, was introduced to his lordship

as a foreign general, with a most imposing and sonorous *nomme de guerre*, which I forget. Instantly did his lordship dismiss all the crotchets which had before taken possession of his brains; resumed his usual demeanour; and, though the lucid interval had not returned, behaved with the utmost politeness to the stranger.

“This farce was kept up for some days, during which the earl, though he continued as mad as a March hare, never broke out into any violence in the presence of his distinguished guest. At length, the paroxysm of the malady abated; his lordship’s customary good sense began to revive, and, one morning, he looked at his keeper with a scrutinising eye. ‘You *may* be a general,’ said he, ‘for aught I know, but, by the ghost of Prince Eugene, you smell damnably of the *halbert*.’ So,” concluded Scott, “the *general’s staff* was *broken*, and the spell dissolved. However, the desired effect had been gained, and his lordship got rid of his mad fit and the general together.”

Of the same nobleman I remember a ludicrous extravaganza. He had been overreached in a bargain by a country attorney, who was one evening summoned to attend at his lordship’s house. With great precision the earl went through the business in hand, read over some papers, paid a sum of money, and took a receipt. He then rose, locked the door, and put the key

in his pocket, walked very deliberately to a secretaire, from which he drew out a pistol, examined the priming, and rubbed his thumb nail along the edge of the flint, to put it in order. Moreover, he kindled a taper. "Now, Mr. —," said he, "I have only to trouble you with one other request, which is, that you will eat that pair of tallow candles, and, by G—, if you don't eat them, I will shoot you directly." Remonstrance would have been in vain. The only palliation, in the sentence, was the being allowed to cut the wicks into shreds with his pen-knife; and the attorney being firmly convinced that his lordship was in a mad fit, felt exceedingly glad to escape with his life on any conditions, therefore submitted to the task without a murmur.

After dinner, when Mrs. Scott retired, the grave formal gentleman, who was, I believe, a native of Glasgow, requested permission to make a bowl of cold punch, which was readily granted. I had then the honour of starting a theme for conversation, which lasted the remainder of the evening; for, having this much in common with the author of "Waverley," that I was fond of antiquities, I proposed a secret excursion to Roslin chapel at the dead of night; that we should enter it by the window of the sacristy on the east, provided with a dark lantern, and

all necessary implements, and should dig up and carry away at least one of the twenty coats of armour which are said to be mouldering under the cold stones of the chapel. Had any one actually ventured on this exploit, I am persuaded Scott would have been among the first to prevent or punish the offender; for such infringement on sacred ground, and the etiquette due even to the dead in old families, was quite inconsistent with his principles. But *I*, for one, was perfectly serious; and it amused our host to humour the plan, and enter into all its details, more especially as our solemn friend, Mr. Macritchie, over his bowl of punch, taking the whole in downright earnest, became ludicrously zealous in interposing wise objections, and starting endless doubts as to the hazard and impropriety of the undertaking. To parry his arguments, seemed to afford Scott great entertainment. Leyden, I believe, felt as gravely bent as myself on carrying this plan into execution, though he screamed with laughter at the conversation; and a day was actually appointed for the "Raid of Roslin," but subsequently, on account of bad weather, not to speak of other motives, our scheme was abandoned.

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CHAPTER VI.

LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL—COWPER'S TASK—FRIENDLY,
BUT ERRONEOUS CRITICISM—APPOINTMENT AS SHERIFF—
PARTY SPIRIT—PUBLICATION OF THE LAY.

ON the merest trifle often hinges the fortune of a whole future life ; and had it not been for the accidental suggestion of the beautiful, accomplished, and truly amiable Countess of Dalkeith, Scott would *certainly* never have written his first metrical romance ; and, *possibly*, never even dreamed of rising to high eminence as an author. She had heard the legend of the dwarf-demon, " Gilpin Horner," and wished to have some verses written about him, probably thinking this would be an easy task ; and her slightest wish was a law. But the dwarf was no very poetical personage. He had made his appearance unexpectedly, it is true ; had behaved capriciously, like Number Nip ; frightened both grown people and children ; shewn the notable inclination for mischief, which is customary with devils ; and at last vanished as unexpectedly as he came : but all this was quite as well told in prose, as in the best rhymes that ever were penned. In

order to meet Lady Dalkeith's wishes, therefore, he must be introduced as an inferior and infernal agent in some plot of importance, which was yet to be devised. Neither the devil nor his imps could be brought into poetry for their own sakes, nor unless there was something of consequence to be done. Thus arose the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," though the original idea of "Gilpin" soon became subordinate, and was lost in the superstructure.

In regard to the composition of his first long poem, Scott resembled an author from whom, in other respects, he most widely differed. Lady Hesketh wished that Cowper would write for her a few lines or pages of blank verse, and gave him, at hap-hazard, the "Sofa" for a subject. He began with no higher aim than to fulfil the commands of his female friend; and the result was, that a long and most original poem unexpectedly rose up, which formed at once the basis of his immediate and lasting reputation. The analogy does not stop here. In after life Cowper planned another blank verse poem, which, at the outset, he intended for a great work, to be entitled the "Four Ages of Man;" but he wrote with difficulty only about one hundred lines, and nothing more came of it. With this might be compared the "Lord of the Isles," though the difference betwixt Scott's

character and that of Cowper cut off the risk of its remaining unfinished. The subject was the best he had yet treated; and there is no want either of strength or art; yet the genial feelings, the *vivida vis*, the *je ne sais quoi* of poetic inspiration were less obvious; and, instead of adding by it to his celebrity, he had the mortification of seeing it drop almost still-born from the press.

Of the *Last Minstrel* he wrote, at Lady Dalkeith's request, some opening stanzas, which he read to his friends, who, being of course utterly unconscious of the effects to which such a commencement might lead, received them with great coldness. The rule holds good, never to shew to fools or children a work half done. His readers thought the beginning very odd; had not the remotest conception of the author's latent powers; and, as usual with critics in such cases, were inclined to think the worst.* Although he at first destroyed his production, and seemed to abandon the idea, yet there is no doubt he had conceived the plan of an entire poem; for, when *one* friendly critic afterwards declared that the lines had dwelt on his remembrance, and he wished the author would go on with it, the work

* Nearly the same thing took place twelve years afterwards with regard to the first chapters of "Waverley."

proceeded at the rate of about a canto in a week. Such rapidity was a natural effect of his vivid conception of character and situation, which carried him on without effort, so that the work proved as entertaining to the author in composition, as to his admirers in perusal. In the "Last Minstrel," we find that happy blending of descriptive passages with the narrative, which forms a leading charm of the Waverley novels; and the language and metre present the careless freedom natural to a man who feels himself master of the subject, and that in his hand it is thoroughly *plastic*. The mere simple ballad of "Rosabelle" alone — so clear, so graphic, and so melodious — would have been enough to acquire for its composer the reputation of a poet.

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His appointment as sheriff, and migration from Lasswade to his new residence, formed, of course, a grand epoch in a quiet literary life. Ashestiel was an old and rather dilapidated house; not in itself romantic, but situated in Ettrick forest, amid scenery affording all those elements which a poetic mind delights to combine and work upon. It stands close to the banks of the bold and bright river Tweed, which flows past the garden on the south; and is surrounded by wild mountains, exhibiting here

and there the gray ruins of an ancient fortress, and straggling patches of underwood, remnants of the once celebrated forest. It was a scene in every respect congenial to his taste and imagination; he could here live *more majorem*, after the style of his own baronial ancestors, nor enjoy the pleasures of the "merry greenwood" one tittle the less because the domains were not his own. The profound solitude and tranquillity of this district were admirably adapted to promote literary industry and invention; all its features were suited to revive and deepen those early impressions from the lonely heaths of Roxburghshire already so often mentioned, and to which he owed his first poetic reveries and impulses.

Scott was now probably aware that he moved in a path which might lead him to the highest honours, and may have felt some share of that intoxication which gratified ambition usually excites; but if so, not the slightest trace of any such feeling appeared in his outward demeanour, which was invariably humble and unpretending. At this time party spirit was cherished in Scotland to a degree which, in the present era, would appear ludicrous and absurd; and the poetical sheriff of Selkirk being an individual highly esteemed by leading members of the Tory faction, was proportionably disliked by the

Whigs, with whom, however, he always kept ostensibly on the best possible terms; for, though they might condemn his principles, or affect to despise his ballads, they at least could not deny the amenity of his manners, and the sterling integrity of his character in private life.

In the beautiful and quiet seclusion of Ashestiel, the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" was completed, and appeared in 1805. Rapidly it spread his reputation, and the most inspiring *encomia* poured in from all quarters. The description of Melrose Abbey, and the ballad of "Rosabelle," were imprinted on every one not utterly unsusceptible of the charms of romantic poetry; and it was scarce possible to visit any house where a copy of this expensive quarto, with its "rivulet of verse flowing through a meadow of margin," was not to be found on the drawing-room table. Yet the poem had, of course, its hypercritics, especially some wiseacres among the Whig faction, who were not disposed to admit that what was so contrary to established rules, and to their criterions of excellence, should be considered poetry. But the intrinsic beauty, the originality, and vivid feelings of the "Lay," were attractions too powerful to be resisted. These potent spells had done their duty; had worked their way to the hearts of the public; and the empire thus gained, could not be un-

dermined nor shaken by the efforts of such petty cavillers. The volume produced to the author an *honorarium* of six hundred pounds; by far the largest sum which had ever been paid in Scotland for any poetical production.

CHAPTER VII.

EQUANIMITY — ANNOUNCE IN 1807 OF EPISTLES FROM ET-
TRICK FOREST — APPOINTMENT AS CLERK OF SESSION —
BIBLIOGRAPHY.

MEANWHILE, no one ever bore his new honours more meekly than the admired "Minstrel," who seems to have adopted, very early in life, those principles of indifference to outward causes of excitation, which he has himself recorded. He had traced the sufferings of the *genus irritabile vatorum* to that very irritability which they might have easily avoided; and was determined, therefore, to concentrate his attention on his own pursuits, without allowing himself to be either misled by plaudits, or vexed by criticism. In this respect, perhaps, he may be compared to his great contemporary Goethe, who used to say, that his leading maxim through life had been, to keep himself in a state of tranquillity. Notwithstanding the admiration excited by the "Lay," it was Scott's persevering practice to give himself out for a mere man of business. Daily and regularly he appeared during the session on the boards of the parliament-house;

and though no strife arose amongst attorneys who should first secure his assistance, yet he went through the routine of duty, and maintained that literature should never be allowed to supersede professional engagements. But all the world now courted his society, and every one expressed a wish that he would produce another poem. For two years, however, he remained undecided what was to be the subject; and, during this interval, contented himself with publishing a separate edition of his "Ballads and Lyrical Pieces;" and announcing, in the end of 1807, "Six Epistles from Ettrick Forest," which were then partly written, but were afterwards remodelled, and adapted as introductory dedications prefixed to the several cantos of "Marmion."

Benefits, like misfortunes, rarely come single; and within the next year after the flattering reception of the "Last Minstrel, the friends whom he had gained, and who were steadily attached to him, obtained for Scott from Mr. Pitt's government the promise of a situation, the best of all adapted to his wishes; namely, that of a principal clerk of session, whose duty it is to sit immediately under the bench, and take down the decisions of the court, also to sign divers papers. The appointment was ratified with many complimentary expressions by Mr. Fox

and his friends during their short accession to power. In order to fulfil the duties of this place, rapidity and precision of penmanship are especially requisite ; and for these qualifications (the rapidity in particular) Scott, until his latter years, was eminently distinguished. After his illness in 1819, however, his hand became much changed ; and though similar in character, was cramped, and even illegible, except to those who were habituated to its peculiarities. His predecessor, Mr. George Home, who had broke down under the Herculean task of noting decisions, but who still survived, drew, for several years, the entire profits of the situation ; till, in 1812, this gentleman received a pension and retired ; so that, henceforth, Scott derived a competent income from his appointment, not, indeed, always the same, but averaging at 1500*l.* per annum.

He was thus completely withdrawn from the bar ; and, like a voyager who had got into port, might still look upon himself as a traveller or man of business, if he would ; but all that he had to do in the latter capacity, was to keep pen in hand, and note down decisions. The employment, however, would have proved exceedingly irksome to any literary man not accustomed by strict discipline and early rising to

make the most of his time, for he was under the necessity of attending in court every day from ten to two o'clock. But, instead of being annoyed by such drudgery, it seemed as if he delighted in it, and had some feelings of self-complacency at rendering himself useful. The lord-president had before ironically said, that he was eminently well provided with clerks, having four, of whom, "one could not read, another could not write, and two could neither read nor write!" On the contrary, Mr. Scott, from the commencement of his labours, was complimented by the judge for the correctness and celerity with which he acquitted himself; and, I believe, he felt as much flattered by such approbation, as by the praise bestowed on his poetry.

I have an imperfect remembrance of some stanzas written by the Rev. James Marriott, "On Mr. Walter Scott's leaving the Bar," and first published in the "Edinburgh Annual Register." They were so well conceived and expressed, that I would have transcribed them here, but have no access to a copy, nor, indeed, to any book.

The predictions of Mr. Marriott and his other friends were realised. No sooner had he obtained a situation which would have induced most other people to subside into quiescence,

than he began, in right earnest, those literary labours which continued henceforth without intermission, until nearly the close of his life. At this period the *mania* for black-letter books began to manifest itself in the land; and, like the once notable tulip-madness in Holland, proved an important source of emolument to those who had even a small capital to embark in the production of rare specimens. It was quite possible for such traders occasionally to purchase, for a trifling sum, an entire library from some improvident or illiterate representative of an old family, by whom the books were looked upon as mere lumber. From these the fortunate purchaser well knew how to select the *gems* inestimable in the eyes of a collector, any one of which, being properly *set* and adorned in its fragrant binding of Russia leather, would sometimes bring more than as much money as had been given for the whole lot! It was, indeed, on this basis principally, that the late Mr. Constable, who had the honour of publishing the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," and "Marmion," contrived to accumulate that wealth, or acquire that credit, which, if more prudently managed, might have insured him stability and reputation for life. Mr. Scott was one of the very few among Constable's patrons who could turn this

mania to good account ; for, whilst he seemed to the uninitiated to have an indiscriminate appetite for old books of every description, the truth was, that he seldom made a purchase of one without some rational and special object in view. The volume in itself *alone* might be of no value, but *joined in* as collateral evidence, and served like one of the component stones of an arch ; his old books being all reduced into particular classes, each bearing on some particular point or era in history, manners, criticism, politics, or superstition. Among his collections in this way, by far the most valuable were those in the department of Scottish and English history. But, for many years, one of his favourite pursuits was that of demonology and witchcraft ; a subject which he, no doubt, would have treated with great effect, had it not been laid aside for better things, till the "evil days came ;" and in all that he then wrote, however estimable, there appeared to those who had known him in better times, the characteristics of hurry and constraint. The learning, industry, and research, were still obvious ; and in almost every page, some line or sentence existed, which was in unison with the tone of former days ; but the genial spirit which ought to have animated and harmonised the whole, no longer appeared. The work was

task-work ; and the energy which prompted such exertions, under disadvantageous circumstances and painful impressions, soon worked its own decay.

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SECTION III.

“ LOVE, HONOUR, OBEDIENCE, TROOPS OF
FRIENDS.”

CHAPTER I.

PUBLICATION OF MARMION—MODE OF COMPOSITION—
DUCHESS OF GORDON—EDITION OF DRYDEN, AND VARIOUS
OTHER TASKS—JOHN BALLANTYNE AND CO.

IN authorship, whatever be the rank and talents of the writer, the assistance of a trading publisher is requisite. This is quite as indispensable as counsel at a trial in court, where an attempt, either by plaintiff or defendant, to plead his own cause, is generally a wretched failure. A tradesman becomes an author's medium of communicating with the public, as the counsel is betwixt the litigant and judge; and the best book in the world, without such aid, will, of course, be lost, like an undefended cause. From commencement to the end, there were circumstances which embittered Sir Walter Scott's connexion with his principal publisher, and it might have been well

had he succeeded in breaking it off altogether. There was in Constable, along with an open countenance and specious manners, a degree of craft, cunning, and selfish ambition, which at last proved his ruin. The truth was, that his real means was always slender; nor had he any method of increasing his store, except by living on the talents and industry of others, and overreaching them in bargains. How to do this with sufficient address, was his grand object. Accordingly, he smiled, bowed, and cajoled in the presence of certain leading men, whose countenance and support he trusted would bear him through. But it happened, from his being publisher of the "Edinburgh Review," that Constable's chief supporters were among the Whig faction, who entertained of Scott a very bitter jealousy, and were the more incensed against him exactly as his acquirements and reputation advanced.*

It required no great discrimination on the part of the bookseller to perceive that Mr. Scott was an author of extraordinary merit; and that,

* It has been said that I have blamed the late Mr. Constable far too much, and entirely forgotten his merits. Notwithstanding the *ruinous consequences* of that plausible manner and selfish ambition which I have mentioned, it is but just to add, that Sir Walter never, to my knowledge, uttered against his publisher one word of reproach.

having already a competent income (though Mr. Home had not yet retired), he was not likely to send forth another poem unless a suitable price were offered for the copyright. He, therefore, boldly, and as it afterwards turned out, wisely offered one thousand pounds for the next metrical romance; and it is doubtful if "Marmion" would have been so soon composed, or given to the world, had not the author wished to command this round sum for the special purpose of assisting a friend who was then distressed.* Strange to say, even this production was sent to press,—I mean the printing had commenced,—long before the work was finished, and before the author had clearly determined how the story was to be wound up. But almost all his works were perfected in this manner. It seemed as if he delighted in that stimulus of self-imposed necessity under which most writers would have infallibly broken down. Besides the excitement of being obliged to feed the press, there was, perhaps, a gratification of conscious talent in bringing his *dramatis personæ* into such a predicament that it might seem wholly impossible to extricate them, and yet making his way through the confusion as if with the power

* The profits afterwards realised, when a novel, written in three months (perhaps in three weeks), brought seven or eight thousand pounds, were not yet even dreamed of.

of a magician. Doubtless, a fictitious story, in whatever stage it may be, is still *plastic*; but those who have hypercriticised on the awkward terminations to some of his plots, might, if they had known the attendant circumstances, have rather wondered how any thing like a rational *denouement* could be effected at all.

“Marmion,” after printing had been commenced, advanced with great rapidity, most part being composed during the winter of 1808, amid the daily interruptions caused by his attendance at the parliament-house, and convivial meetings, among which might be reckoned the dinner and evening parties of the late witty and pleasant Duchess of Gordon; where he was occasionally, though with great reluctance, prevailed on to read aloud some portions of his new poem. But I think Scott had by this time adopted his favourite plan of early-rising, by which he acquired a command of leisure unknown to others; and he had the advantages of excellent health, with a most exuberant flow of spirits.

It is superfluous to observe, that the effect of this poem on the public mind was almost magical. To a well-constructed plot is added the charm of a constant succession of most vivid and highly finished pictures, to which none could refuse the praise of strength and originality. In short, it has the character of one of his best

prose romances, worked up into powerful and harmonious verse; the sort of composition in which, above all, he was most qualified to excel. Sir Walter had now become perfectly aware of his own strength. With a degree of patience and *quietude*, which are seldom combined with much energy, he could get through an incredible extent of literary labour, and he had secured very high reputation. Hence many new paths were opened to him. He could gain both fame and profit by mere editorship, by criticism, antiquarianism, biography, and history; for it was obvious that, whatever he chose to produce in these various departments, would be eagerly grasped at, and prove a source of emolument. At the suggestion of Constable, therefore, he carefully edited the works of Dryden, in eighteen volumes octavo, which appeared not long after the publication of "Marmion." In this production he aimed, not without success, at rendering the memoirs of Dryden a history of English literature and taste during the period of that poet's life; and the annotations on his works include numberless remarks and illustrations, which could not be incorporated in the biography. The command which he possessed over the world of old books, the good use he had made of his accumulating stores, and the extent of his researches, now became apparent.

To most people, the wading through such a mass of materials as the works of Dryden present, and enriching the pages with criticism and *memoranda*, would have supplied labour for years; but to Scott, at this period of life, it was only a pleasant diversion from employments which required more concentrated application of his faculties.

As I have said, Sir Walter Scott had no great reason to be partial to the house of Constable as a publisher; and, from the ridiculous degree to which party-spirit was then carried, it might be unpleasant to find himself there surrounded by the numerous *clique* of Edinburgh Whigs. Consequently, after he had edited, along with the late Mr. Arthur Clifford, a collection of "Sir Ralph Sadler's State Papers," in two large quartos, and the "Somers's Tracts," in six ponderous volumes, he readily listened to plans of the late Mr. John Ballantyne, for establishing a new bookselling company at Edinburgh, on principles which afforded better prospects to authors than had yet existed in North Britain. The Kelso press of Mr. James Ballantyne had been already moved to the metropolis, and was flourishing, though not without such aid from Scott as rendered him virtually a partner, and led *indirectly* and ultimately to those bill transactions with Constable which turned out so destructive.

Under the high auspices of Scott, it proved an easy matter, privately, and with the aid of a few friends, to organise the scheme of the new bookselling company, 'with which several literary gentlemen were connected as partisans and *quasi* shareholders. After its establishment, the author of "Marmion," greatly to the annoyance of Mr. Constable, almost wholly withdrew himself from the dingy premises of the High Street, and directed his steps to the cheerful and handsome drawing-room of Mr. John Ballantyne, in the new town, where there was good store of his favourite black-letter volumes, and which formed a convenient resting-place in his daily journeys to and from the parliament-house.

CHAPTER II.

LADY OF THE LAKE—HIGHLAND SCENERY—EARLY RISING—
WALLACE—PECUNIARY EMOLUMENT—CALLANDER AND
LOCH KATRINE.

IN order to do something effectual for the new firm of Ballantyne and Co., Scott rapidly completed the "Lady of the Lake;" to which production, as he has himself explained, he was led by the deep impressions which the beautiful scenery of the Perthshire highlands had left on his remembrance. Indeed, so vivid were his conceptions of inanimate nature, that I believe every one of his novels, as well as poems, took its rise partly in this way. Even when he laid the scene in a foreign country which he had never visited, he would draw in his "mind's eye" the portrait of mountains, woods, trees, houses, and gardens, which he had actually beheld. The following passage from his brief autobiography is eminently characteristic:

"I took uncommon pains to verify the accuracy of the *local* circumstances of this story. I recollect, in particular, that, to ascertain whether I were telling a probable tale, I went

into Perthshire, to see whether King James could actually have ridden from the banks of Loch Vennachar to Stirling Castle within the time supposed in the poem, and had the pleasure to satisfy myself that it was quite possible."

If the period of his residence at Lasswade was the happiest of his life, I believe that of the composition of the "Lady of the Lake" was incomparably the best era in the annals of his mind as to poetical power. He then ruled as if with the full sway of a magician over a literary world, which one might almost say he had created; for he had made people judges of poetry who had never even dreamed of it before, and inspired those with a love of books who, heretofore, were amply contented with a weekly newspaper. Till then, the wild hills and lakes of Menteith, Glenfinlas, and the Trossac, were scarcely known by name to any one who had not visited the district; but now, the mere distant pinnacle of any mountain commemorated in the poem was hailed as an object of interest. I shall never forget the enthusiastic regard with which the young and beautiful L—— S—— contemplated the cliffs of Benvoirlich, seen for the first time about twenty miles distant, as she repeated,—

"With hark and whoop, and wild halloo,
No rest Benvoirlich's echoes knew."

Thus, within the districts of Menteith and Stirling, the poet had also given a new character to the material world; and, such is the force of genius, that his own feelings, instead of remaining peculiar, became general.

Meanwhile, his health and spirits continued unbroken, and seemingly unconquerable. Like the once renowned Lopez de Vega (to whom, in other respects, he has occasionally been compared), he had now formed the regular habit of composing all his works early in the morning, and before breakfast; in regard to which he used to say, that he owed much to the "exemplary character and admonitions of his friend Wallace," a little wiry-haired and ill-favoured terrier, who was at this time his constant companion and prime favourite. I believe the adoption of such active habits is a sort of criterion by which it may be judged who is or is not fitted to succeed in the world. Instead of being a means to prolong life, it seems to me only a proof of health and spirits. No one will rise very early who does not feel a disposition to work or exercise, which renders much rest unnecessary.

However, this may be erroneous, and there may be very different reasons. I have, indeed, frequently heard Sir Walter observe, that the system of commencing his employments at so

early an hour, was at first exceedingly disagreeable, and he persisted in it from a conviction that it *might* become habitual, and that the contrary plan of night-vigils was exceedingly injurious. As no one ever more decidedly exemplified the chivalrous characteristic of self-denial than the author of "Waverley," possibly, therefore, this practice was like his other attainments, won by that resolute and unflinching perseverance on principles of duty which I have already commemorated. His attendance in court, and subsequent convivial meetings, would otherwise have cut up the entire day. But, invariably, he had three hours' work before going to the parliament-house; and this regularly continued, he used to maintain, was enough for the pursuits of authorship.

The copyright of the "Lady of the Lake" was purchased by Messrs. Ballantyne and Co. for four thousand pounds; though, whether the amount was handed over in cash to the author by the house in which he was himself virtually a partner, or carried to his credit, is uncertain. The circulation of this poem, however, was so extraordinary, so completely unprecedented, that it must have been a most profitable speculation to all parties. Of "Marmion," according to Sir Walter Scott's own account, the sale in sixteen years, was thirty-six thousand copies; which,

allowing amply for the expense of paper, printing, and advertising, must obviously have been a source of great profit to Mr. Constable as proprietor, and well justified his payment of 1000*l.* in hard cash for the copyright. It is probable that the "Lady of the Lake," during the first three years after publication, and before the house of John Ballantyne and Co. began to totter, circulated and sold to three times the amount of "Marmion" within an equal period. Whatever fame he had formerly gained as a poet, was quite outshone by this production. Amongst other proofs of the interest it excited, may be mentioned the multitude of visitors of all ranks, classes, and denominations, even from the most distant regions of the world, who flocked to the hitherto neglected and rarely trodden district of Loch Katrine, for the sole purpose of beholding the actual scenes which were so vividly described by the "Minstrel." Till then the village of Callander (near Loch Katrine,) had been so little frequented, that the descriptions of miserable inns, bad roads, and every species of discomfort, which have been often drawn from imagination, might there be found *realised*. The principles of the clan Maclarty (see Mrs. Hamilton's "Cottagers of Glenburnie,") were developed in their fullest perfection. Nor were

changes for the better easily to be effected in a district where nothing goes on so smoothly as the consumption of whisky. By degrees, however, the road to Loch Katrine was improved; and, at the barbarous (though large) inn, where, in the midst of forests full of game, and lakes teeming with fish, it was scarce possible to obtain even the materials for breakfast, there arrived daily a succession of brilliant equipages, so that one could contemplate the *beau monde* almost as well at the remote village of Callander, as at Brighton, Bath, or Cheltenham.

CHAPTER III.

PURCHASE OF ABBOTSFORD — DIALOGUE WHEN HE FIRST
SURVEYED THE PROPERTY — EDINBURGH ANNUAL RE-
GISTER — PATIENT INDUSTRY — INFERNO OF ALTESIDORA —
DINNER PARTY — LUDICROUS ANECDOTE.

Nor long after the publication of the "Lady of the Lake," Scott, who had all his life a partiality for landscape gardening, and a wish to possess some landed property in his own right, came, during his rambles along the banks of the Tweed, to a spot which was then for sale, and of which the purchase-money was but a small sum. It was a poor and neglected farm of no great extent; but having this advantage, that the adjoining country being, in a great measure, wild, and free from inclosures, he might wander a long way before being reminded by any fence or cultivated field, that he had gone beyond the bounds of his own (intended) domain. The only house was a half-ruinous cottage, rendered more gloomy of aspect by a row of scattered and stunted Scotch firs, the most unpoetic and unpicturesque of trees. The only redeeming traits in the landscape, were the meanderings

of the bright and bold Tweed, and the diversity of hill and dale, so well suited for ornamental planting.

At one of his earliest visits to Abbotsford, (known at that time by the *rather* unprepossessing name of "Clarty Holes"), Scott was accompanied by a sagacious friend, who noticed the extreme sterility of the soil, which would yield no returns by cropping.

"Cropping, indeed!" he answered. "You take it for granted, then, that I came here with the intention of growing rich as a gentleman farmer? No, truly; I leave the scientific manufacture of rich *compost* to Dr. Coventry and Lord Meadowbank. But the main question is, what sort of crops you wish to raise? I should, in the first place, think of rearing plenty of wood for ornament and shelter; and we must live as the knights did of old, only without so much fighting. Depend on it we shall grow enough of oats and wheat to feed ourselves and horses. Fish and game we shall have in abundance; and if sheep and kine should be wanting, which is not likely, we must make a *raid* into Traquair, and drive away from your rich pastures as much of the stock as we think needful.

"But, in sober earnest," he continued, "this farm-cottage might do very well to live in. It is, at all events, the beginning of a mansion,

and I could get help in that department from William Stewart Rose. Though not yet possessed of Aladdin's lamp, we could very soon run up a "hurricane house," affording quite as much accommodation as we ourselves require, besides two or three pigeon-holes for friends to sleep in when they come to visit us. *Here*, if I should ever become rich, is the spot whereon I would build my castle. *Yonder*, in the level ground to the left, I would have my garden; and there should be a sweeping carriage-drive down the slope, opening from the cart-road on the hill-side. The ground is poor, you say; but it is very good for the growth of wood. I would plant a large proportion of mountain-ash, Scotch firs, and larch, for the sake of their rapid growth, near the castle; but on the hills, I would prefer oak, birch, hazel, and other trees, of which the bark is suitable for the tanner; so that every fifteen or twenty years, those who come after me might have a profitable fall of copsewood."

In this manner he ran on, delighting his imagination with ideas which were amply and accurately realised. The purchase was completed for about five thousand pounds, I believe, and afforded far more satisfaction to Scott than any acquisition he had before made. I remember well the first sketch of ornamental improvement

at Abbotsford in his own hand ;— a rare specimen, for he was no draughtsman. It was only a design for a kind of rustic piazza, the supporters being of trees with the bark on, and intended as a front to the original old cottage, after it had been stretched, as he termed it, into some additional rooms, and rendered merely habitable for the family. The comparison of Abbotsford House as it *now* exists to a “ romance in stone and lime,” is very good, for there are many points of analogy. He found only a mere remnant of old materials to work upon, in which respect the original cottage might fantastically be likened to the fragment of an old ballad or popular tradition, and all around was a dreary waste, which his taste and imagination gradually adorned and brightened. Moreover, having no *fixed* plan at the outset, he proceeded exactly as in his written compositions, falling into seemingly inextricable perplexities and incongruities, out of which his genius at last produced an interesting and even magnificent *whole*.

About this period his health and spirits were so good, that he was ready for almost any undertaking in literature ; and, I believe, fulfilled many tasks which have not been included in his acknowledged works. I might instance the historical part of the “ Edinburgh Annual Register,” at least one year of which was entirely

supplied by him. He owned to me at the time, that this was a most irksome trial of patience, and complained of the *heavy* pages, meaning the extent of writing required to fill double columns; though this was in truth nothing to the labours which he cheerfully underwent in latter years, until his strength became utterly exhausted. I have often thought of his expressions one afternoon, when, according to his own account, "jaded and perplexed," he was at work on the "Register." "Jack Leyden's theory, that fatigue is a mere mental illusion," said he, "would be vastly good, were it not that, like other promising theories, it breaks down in practice. But there is only one rule in such cases, merely, *not to let the ink dry in your pen till the task is done.* 'Gutta cavit lapidem, non vi, sed sæpe cadendo,' says the school copy-book; and on this principle a scribbler sometimes becomes agreeably surprised at the extent of tiresome and rugged road that he has got over."

In the *belles lettres* department of this work appeared, under the title "Inferno of Altesidora," his first anonymous *jeu d'esprit*, which formed a sort of *rehearsal* of the amusing mystification so long kept up with regard to the Waverley novels. The devils of the "Inferno" play at battledore, and take books for shuttle-

cocks, which fly about in fragments, some of which are collected, and exhibit imitations of the best living poets of the day. Of the author of "Marmion," it might be said (*Hibernicé*), "none but himself could be his parallel;" for, at one glance, his friends perceived the extreme improbability that any one else could have written the stanzas entitled the "Vision" (afterwards "Bridal) of Triermain." However, he, of course, stoutly disowned them, and seemed greatly amused by the conjectures that were started as to who really was the author. According to his own avowed opinion, the article must have been contributed either by his facetious publisher, John Ballantyne, who wrote as well as criticised; or by Mr. Terry, the actor; while these gentlemen declared their inability to write any thing half so good; but knowing Scott's wish to remain incognito, said it was most probably the work of Mr. Marriott, or Mr. William Erskine.

This "Inferno," I think, was published in 1811, when John Ballantyne and Co. had a large stock in trade, and were looked on as a flourishing house, with ample capital. After the highly flattering reception of the "Lady of the Lake," Sir Walter dined now and then with his friendly publisher, who used to keep, stored up for the occasion, some particularly rare and

curious volumes, which, he was convinced, the "Minstrel" had never seen before, and produce them in the drawing-room, as the best prelude to the day's entertainment. But, as already observed, such acquisitions were not valued by Scott for their rarity alone, but because they always excited in his mind a train of antiquarian and historical associations, by which some old subject might be placed in a light entirely new. In this way it happened that a rare *editio princeps* of one of King James the First's numerous productions suggested the compilation of a work that afterwards appeared in two volumes octavo, respecting the private life, odd habits, and amusements of this eccentric monarch. It was very entertaining, and has now, I suppose, become somewhat rare in its turn.

On no occasion did Sir Walter appear in greater spirits than at these quiet and unceremonious parties in South Hanover Street. He well knew that the high honour of his presence was duly and thankfully appreciated. He was surrounded by friends and admirers; and the whole company met with the unanimous purpose of shaking off the cares of life, and to be merry. If any occurrence ever excited a *sarcastic* propensity in Scott's mind, it was, perhaps, when some egotistical pedant or coxcomb sedulously

aimed at being witty, sententious, or dictatorial in conversation. His own demeanour and discourse were always admirably characterised by what the French call *abandon*, tempered, of course, by invariable good sense and good tact. Properly speaking, *he* had neither aim nor object, for the mirth and good-humour came *unsought-for and spontaneous*. At such parties he would sometimes parade in full dress, with white silk stockings, a scarlet silk under-waistcoat, and uniform coat of the Border Club, for Mrs. Balantyne presided at the dinner-table. Among the guests appeared occasionally, the late John Kemble, Mr. Henry Mackenzie, Sir Brooke Boothby, Lord Kinnedder, and divers members of the theatrical and musical world. From these days not a line of the conversation has dwelt on my recollection, except a short anecdote, which, as usual, derived its effect more from the quaint manner of the narrator, than any intrinsic merit.

Be it remembered, then, that the hatred and jealousy which formerly existed in full force betwixt the Scotch and English, are scarcely extirpated on the borders even at the present day; and that the last great battle of Flodden, wherein the Scotch were so signally defeated, and their king lost his life, is never forgotten or forgiven by the patriots north of the Tweed.

During an excursion into Cumberland it happened, at a small country town, that Scott suddenly required medical advice for one of his servants, and, on inquiring if there was any doctor at the place, was told that there were two—one long established, and the other a new-comer. The latter gentleman, being luckily found at home, soon made his appearance,—a grave, sagacious-looking personage, attired in black, with a shovel hat—in whom, to his utter astonishment, Sir Walter recognised a Scotch blacksmith, who had formerly practised, with tolerable success, as a veterinary operator in the neighbourhood of Ashestiel.

“How, in all the world!” exclaimed he, “can it be possible that this is John Lundie?”

“In troth is it, your honour—just *a' that's for him!*”

“Well, but let us hear: you were a *horse-doctor* before; now, it seems, you are a *man-doctor*: how do you get on?”

“Ow, just extraordinar' weel: for, your honour maun ken, my practice is vera sure and orthodox. I depend entirely upon twa *simples*.”

“And what may their names be? Perhaps it is a secret?”

“I'll tell your honour,” in a low tone; “my twa simples are just *Laudamy* and *Calamy!*”

“Simples with a vengeance!” replied Scott.

“ But, John, do you never happen to *kill* any of your patients ? ”

“ Kill ? Ow ay, may be *sae* ! Whiles they die, and whiles no ; but its the will o’ Providence. *Ony how, your honour, it wad be lang before it makes up for Flodden !* ”

This, however trifling, may be considered a fair specimen of those quaint and concise anecdotes that Sir Walter often introduced in conversation, and in regard to which one peculiarity was, that scarce any of his acquaintance ever heard him repeat the same story twice over ; even if one tried to elicit a repetition, some other odd illustration usually came in place of the anecdote expected. It is said that a humourist should not laugh at his own jokes ; but, surely, when his audience laugh he may be permitted to join them *convivially* ; and this Sir Walter failed not to do. Many a time, betwixt nine and ten in the morning, I have heard the oaken roof of the Outer House ring to his joyous and hearty laugh, as he walked about with his friends, for pastime, till the judges made their appearance.

CHAPTER IV.

DON RODERICK — POETICAL CRITICISM, AND REMARKS ON
THE NECESSITY OF LABOUR — DINNER PARTY — MISS
SEWARD'S LETTERS — SIR BROOKE BOOTHBY — POETICAL
ASPIRANTS — LORD HERMAND — MR. M. LAING.

HIS next poem was the "Vision of Don Roderick," which appeared in June 1811, and on which he bestowed more than usual pains. The profits went entirely to some charitable and public purpose, which I have forgotten. But I remember, as well as it had been yesterday, meeting Sir Walter at the house of John Ballantyne and Co., in the month of May that year, when he proposed that I should walk home with him to dinner, and act the part of his "Old Woman," as he intended to read aloud the beginning of a "new ditty," which he had on the anvil, and I "must tell him *truly* whether it sounded like sense or nonsense." For *my* opinion it is not likely that he could care much, but I happened to be then in bad health, and his object was to afford diversion and encouragement to an invalid. He was, indeed, always ready to share his own high spirits, his stores of information, his books,

and his purse, with those who required assistance; of which last I have sometimes been an accidental witness, in instances where his princely generosity never came to the knowledge of any *fourth* party, for, on such occasions, he earnestly shunned observation or notoriety.

Scott had just returned from Ashestiel, and brought with him, as usual, a renewed stock of health and spirits, being much delighted with the improvements commenced at his new territory of Abbotsford. Especially, too, he rejoiced, for the moment, at the acquisition of some black-letter books obtained for him by Mr. Ballantyne; of which one was the *editio princeps* of Lady Juliana Berners on "The Noble Art of Hunting," and others were on witchcraft. These he carried home with him, stuffing some of the volumes into his pockets, which he wore of a large size on purpose for books, and holding up the others, as if triumphantly, in his left hand as we moved along. I wished to go home to dress. "If you will go home," said he, "be it so; though we had much better steer at once for Castle Street, where dinner waits—an object of some consideration to one who breakfasts before nine in the morning. As for dressing when we are quite alone, it is out of the question; life is not long enough for such fiddle faddle. Suppose we took a coach, drove down

to Holyrood, and got the loan of Darnley's boots for the occasion; perhaps this might render you, if possible, more welcome in Mrs. Scott's estimation, but, be assured, the silk stockings are of no consequence: so, come along!"

I produced a great roll of paper, scribbled over with a plan for a narrative poem, having wisely and modestly chosen Robert Bruce for my hero; and this he had the condescension to peruse in the library before dinner, observing that "it displayed a great deal of fancy." *Fantastic* enough it certainly was, in all conscience. However, he strenuously (perhaps ironically) advised its completion, on condition that I should not care a rush what people thought of the verses, but work for the sole pleasure of working.

"An author," said he, "never can be properly abstracted from outward life, or absorbed in his subject, if he racks his brains with notions as to what people will say of him; as on this abstraction depends the great pleasure of writing. Rely on it, a great share of the ill health and low spirits which exist in the world, is neither more nor less than one inevitable consequence of having nothing else to do. Labour is absolutely *the charter by which we hold existence*; and be it in picking straws or legislating

for empires, we must all work, or die of *ennui*.* Look at the rich and powerful, who never once thought of composing even an ode or sonnet, nor could achieve such an exploit if their lives depended on it; they toil as hard at fishing, shooting, and fox-hunting, as any of their own labourers in breaking stones or trenching the ground; and they *must* do this as the indispensable means to obtain sound sleep and avoid blue devils. Be assured, that the same necessity for labour is no less imposed on such individuals as by nature and education have the power of using their higher and intellectual instead of their mere corporeal faculties."

On these chance words it may be worth while to pause, as they indicate a leading principle in Sir Walter's mind. And in what manner can we mark the difference of characters in this world better than by putting the question, whether their predominant enjoyments depend on *activity* or *passiveness*, in obedience to animal instinct or in resisting it? It was a leading characteristic of Scott, that he unaffectedly placed his best enjoyments in the fulfilment of laborious tasks,

* The drift of his remarks, at this meeting, being precisely the same with that of a letter dated 1812, I have introduced here a few words extracted from it.

from which even a monk or anchorite of the Middle Ages, although inured to penance, would almost have shrunk in dismay : and on this principle, as well as in other respects, he realised Lavater's definition of genius, namely, the "power of doing that which no one else has done."

"Now, in this intended poem," he continued, "you have, I assure you, a great advantage over me : I have tried, with very indifferent success, to make out a ground plan and elevation for a house at Abbotsford, but never in my life could prepare the plot of a story before hand. One page — or, I should say, one line — suggests another ; and on coming to a stand-still, as it occasionally happens—for we are all liable to ebbs and flows—I very coolly lay it aside and take to something else, till, with the next change of the moon, there begins a new tide of thought."

This day we had no company at dinner, except Mr. Macdonald Buchanan, and Mr. Weber. The former was, I think, scarcely tinged by literature ; he was a colleague of Sir Walter's as clerk of Session, and in no way remarkable, except for his good-humoured placid countenance, and pleasant conviviality. The immense importance which, at that time, I attached to any question of literature or criticism, contrasted with Mr. Buchanan's perfect *nonchalance* on the same points, seemed to afford Scott con-

siderable amusement. By some chance, our conversation turned, during dinner, on the poets and poetesses of the Della Cruscan School, with whose absurdities and affectation he was exceedingly diverted. At the pedantic style of Miss Seward's letters he laughed so heartily, that Mrs. Scott, in a playful tone of reproach, put him in mind of the very kind reception they had met with from the poetess of Lichfield, and the beautiful epitaph he had written for her monument.

"Yes, indeed," he answered, "I remember all this, and a great deal more. The good lady, who is now at rest, did me the unmerited honour to appoint me her literary executor, and I wrote a passable introduction, extolling her works, her beauty, amiability, and so forth; nor would I for a moment laugh, if I thought there was any chance that she could hear me or be vexed about it. But the style of her prose letters, and even her daily conversation, was so extravagantly *stilted*, that nothing can be conceived more ludicrous, unless it were the style of my own letters, which I felt in duty bound to send in reply. Of course, I tried as well as I could to respond in similar language, though *haud passibus equis*; and my productions were such unparalleled specimens of rigmarole, that it is well they also have not come to light."

Mr. Weber alluded to Sir Brooke Boothby, who then resided at Edinburgh, as a member of the Della Cruscan College.

“ No, no, *mein werther herr*,” answered Scott, “ do not include Sir Brooke among them ; what he has published in the poetical department is of a very different character, distinguished rather by simplicity and good taste. Had not Sir Brooke, in his younger years, been too much of a fine gentleman to give himself much trouble about book-making, he might, probably, have risen to considerable eminence as an author. By the by, he has given us some fragments for the ‘ Annual Register,’ which, though trifles, are such as no ordinary man could have written.”

Scott was in the best spirits, and inclined to speak only on subjects which produced merriment, in which his good-natured friend, Buchanan, was always ready to join ; though he, perhaps, did not comprehend much of the literary matters under discussion. During dinner, there was an ample fund for conversation afforded, by the numberless applications made by *aspirants* from all quarters for opinions of their works, and assistance in their efforts to ascend Parnassus. (Their names, however, he of course suppressed.) He was diverted alike by the overweening confidence which most of them betrayed, and the horrors of despondency to which others were

subjected, on discovering that they absolutely could not write verses even to satisfy themselves, far less others.

“And yet these melancholy, desponding gentlemen,” said he, “still whine, and daudle, and *hanker* after the *Muse*, as they call her, and still cling to some lingering hope that I can help them. Only this morning I had a letter from a youth who, most certainly, will commit suicide, or (which is more probable,) find his way into a mad-house, unless John Ballantyne consents to throw away money in printing his verses; and though this might satisfy him for a time, yet afterwards he would grow worse. In truth, I could never understand how this idle trade of rhyming comes to be such a cause of excitement among its votaries. Surely it is a kind of disease requiring medical treatment,—something more formidable than the ordinary *cacoethes scribendi*; and the poetic malady ought to be included in the next edition of ‘Buchan’s Domestic Medicine.’”

By some chance the conversation turned on instances of people who are not only incapable of receiving poetic impressions themselves, but over whom the best poetry seems to have no influence. “After all,” observed our host, “the propensity may be analogous to a musical ear. We all know that there are people who hear very

well, and yet could make no sort of distinctive preference betwixt the notes of 'Roslin Castle' and 'Jenny Nettles!' Lord Hermand, it is said, began resolutely to peruse the 'Lady of the Lake;' and when he got to the *second line*, he exclaimed, '*Monan's rill?* I never heard of this rivulet before!' He then rose to search for it in his largest map, sought a long while in vain, but never recurred to the minstrelsy. And this," he continued, "reminds me of our worthy friend, Malcolm Laing, who, with great acquirements and power of research, affords a singular instance of a mind in which the leading propensity is to find fault and detect blunders. I hardly know how it would be possible to write any thing in the shape of poetry such as to obtain *his* approbation. One might almost imagine him reading aloud some fine passage in the 'Paradise Lost,' which, by his mode of enunciation, would actually change to prose; then turning angrily round, and, in his austere, sharp manner, demanding, — 'do you call this *poetry?*'"

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CHAPTER V.

LORD BYRON—WORDSWORTH—MATURIN—NOVEL-READING
—DON RODERICK—GHOSTS AND APPARITIONS—SCENE IN
THE LIBRARY—WALLACE AGAIN.

I REMEMBER well how correct Scott's impressions were of such beginners in the literary world as had not then acquired any fixed character. Of Lord Byron he had from the first a favourable impression; therefore, by no means agreed with the critique of the "Hours of Idleness" in the "Edinburgh Review." The attack on himself in Lord Byron's Satire, which was now published, he treated as he did all such attacks, with the most perfect good-humour, seeming unaffectedly amused by it. Of this volume, at its appearance, he said, "there cannot be a doubt that Lord Byron has considerable power; how he may use it, or whether he will write any more, it is impossible to guess. *Facit indignatio versus*, — but, spleen and gall are disastrous materials to work with for any length of time." Of Wordsworth he always spoke favourably, insisting that he was a true poet, but predicting that it would be long ere they ob-

tained the praise which they merited from the public.

“There is nothing,” he observed, “which seems to please readers now-a-days so well as a narrative, but they will not be contented with the kind of story which Wordsworth would tell them. They must have characters of all descriptions in the same plot after the dramatic fashion; and, moreover, they insist on a great share of love and murder, cutting and slashing, mystification and suspense. In that respect I am very fortunate, never knowing how I am to get to the end of my tale; so it is, therefore, no wonder if readers afterwards partake of the same perplexity. This reminds me (though it is *à propos des bottes*,) of what happened with Coleridge one evening, after he had taken a double dose of opium. He had, as usual, talked a long time, and, on coming to a full stop, asked one of his admirers whether he had made himself understood? ‘Perfectly,’ said this disciple; ‘I comprehend you in the clearest manner!’ ‘Then you must be a far deeper philosopher than I am,’ said the poet, ‘for I have not myself understood one sentence that I have uttered for the last half hour!’”

Of Maturin, who was then struggling with worldly difficulties, Sir Walter always expressed a favourable, though qualified opinion; and that

he considered him deserving of encouragement, was amply proved by the pecuniary aid which he most kindly rendered.

“It is too true,” he observed, “that *common sense* is a wofully *uncommon* quality among poets; yet it would be a vile heresy to maintain that this *must* be, or *ought* to be the case. In Maturin’s writings there is always great power, so that it becomes the more provoking when, with this advantage, he fails of producing the desired effect. Far less energy than is displayed in “Montorio,” if possessed by a more discreet and experienced workman, would have made a better book. I have been trying to drill him with good advice as well as I can, and hope he will improve.”

It is, perhaps, worth noticing, that if Scott, for his amusement, borrowed a second-rate novel, or other work of imagination (for he found leisure to read in those days), he never failed to discover the merits, if it had any, and generally returned the volumes with a note of thanks, followed up by suggestions what *might have been* made of the story with better management. Of this I remember two instances. One regarded a novel in three volumes, entitled “Forman,” to the best of my recollection, very stupid; but he read it quite through, and perceived that the materials, which were partly

historical, had capability. Another was "Sarsfield," by Mr. Gamble, which he thought an original and lively sketch, but so disfigured by bad taste, that it was a pity some one did not write it over again.

After dinner, when Mrs. Scott, whom he usually styled "Mamma," had retired, and a bottle of "Marmion"* was placed on the table, he went to the library, and brought a manuscript containing nearly half the poem of "Don Roderick;" which portion, notwithstanding the difficulties of the Spenserian stanza, had been composed in about a week. Never did any author read his own productions with less effect than Scott. He seemed actually to proceed on the principle of trying, by his monotonous tone, whether there was any thing essentially good in the verses which would excite interest without any emphasis of delivery. Of course, the present audience were decided in their approbation; but I was especially rejoiced, because "Don Roderick" was in a new style, and would establish his fame in defiance of those cavillers who had asserted that he could not write otherwise than in the shape of a ballad, or without a tale of mystery to lead him on.

* Claret presented to him by Constable and Co. on the publication of "Marmion."

“As to the fame to be derived from it,” said he, “I care very little. The best result would be, the realisation of some hard cash for the poor people who are to be benefited by the sale. I suspect, however, that the “Don” will not be over popular; but I have derived amusement from writing this ditty merely because it is in a kind of measure that I had not tried before, and it was pleasant to find the Spenserian stanza much more easy of execution than I had anticipated.”

His dinner-hour being so early as half past four, there was ample time for conversation; and, for a few minutes, I remember, it turned on ghosts and apparitions.

“The most awkward circumstance about *well-authenticated* hobgoblins,” said he, “is, that they, for the most part, come and disappear without any intelligible object or purpose, except to frighten people; which, with all due deference, seems rather foolish! Very many persons have either seen a ghost, or something like one, and I am myself among the number; but my story is not a jot better than the others I have heard, which, for the most part, were very inept. The *good* stories are sadly devoid of evidence; the *stupid* ones only are authentic.

“There is a particular turning of the high road through the forest near Ashestiel, at a place

which affords no possible means of concealment ; the grass is smooth, and always eaten bare by the sheep ; there is no heather, nor underwood, nor cavern, in which any mortal being could conceal himself. Towards this very spot I was advancing one evening on horseback—please to observe it was *before* dinner, and not long after sunset, so that I ran no risk either of *seeing double*, or wanting sufficient light for my observations. Before me, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile, there stood a human figure, sharply enough defined by the twilight. I advanced ; it stalked about with a long staff in its hand, held like a wand of office, but only went to and fro, keeping at the same corner, till, as I came within a few yards, my friend all in an instant vanished. I was so struck with his eccentric conduct, that, although Mrs. Scott was then in delicate health, and I was anxious to get home to a late dinner, I could not help stopping to examine the ground all about, but in vain ; he had either dissolved into air, or sunk into the earth, where I well knew there was no coal-pit to receive him. Had he lain down on the green sward, the colour of his drapery, which was dusky brown, would have betrayed him at once, so that there was no practicable solution of the mystery.

“ I rode on, and had not advanced above fifty

yards, when, on looking back, my friend was there again, and even more clearly visible than before. 'Now,' said I to myself, 'I most certainly have you!' so wheeled about, and spurred Finella; but the result was as before, he vanished instantaneously. I must candidly confess I had now got enough of the phantasmagoria; and whether it were from a love of home, or a participation in my dislike of this very stupid ghost, no matter, Finella did her best to run away, and would by no means agree to any further process of investigation. I will not deny that I felt somewhat uncomfortable, and half inclined to think that this apparition was a warning of evil to come, or indication, however obscure, of misfortune that had already occurred. So strong was this impression, that I almost feared to ask for Mrs. Scott when I arrived at Ashestiel; but, as Dr. Johnson said on a similar occasion, 'nothing ever came of it.' My family were all as usual; but I did not soon forget the circumstance, because neither the state of the atmosphere, nor outline of the scenery, allowed of explanation by reference to any of those natural phenomena producing apparitions, which, however remarkable, are familiar not only to James Hogg as a poet, but to almost every shepherd in a mountainous district."

Mr. Weber, who acted as amanuensis, and

made extracts for the printers, had retired to his desk soon after dinner; and, at the conclusion of the bottle of "Marmion," which, however, was a *magnum*, our host inquired of Mr. Buchanan, if he would have more wine, which was declined on the plea of being obliged to adopt an abstemious regimen to avoid gout. Coffee was ready above stairs, where we found Mrs. Scott and the young people; also a lady, then employed as a teacher in the family, who played some Scotch airs on the harp, to which the poet seemed to listen with great pleasure, and expressed his hopes that "she found Sophia a good pupil." At about eight o'clock, the hour when people generally sit down to dinner in London, the author of "Marmion" had finished coffee, dinner, and *chasse*, and was again seated at his desk proceeding with "Don Roderick." He had advised me to remain up stairs and pass the time with music, pictures, books, and conversation, till the supper hour of ten; but, having a previous engagement, I took my leave soon after, and, by permission, rapped *en passant* at the library door, to get an old book which he had promised. I found him writing as busily as possible.

"Look here," said he, "I have just begun to copy over the rhymes that you heard to day, and applauded so much. With all deference

to your judgment, there are a thousand faults, which I must try to mend ; and mended they shall be ; or, at least, exchanged for others. To-morrow morning, before parliament-house time, I shall have eight or ten more stanzas complete ; and so will soon arrive at the extent of my tether. Return to supper, if you can ; only don't be late, as you perceive we keep early hours, and Wallace will not suffer me to rest after six in the morning. Come, good dog, and help the poet."

At this hint, Wallace seated himself upright on a chair next his master, who offered him a newspaper, which he directly seized, looking very wise, and holding it firmly and contentedly in his mouth. Scott looked at him with great satisfaction, for he was excessively fond of dogs. " Very well," said he, "*now* we shall get on." And so I left them abruptly, knowing that my " absence would be the best company." On this principle, I was allowed to form an exception on Sundays and Mondays, when he was always much engaged, and when the stout coachman attended the door, and, in a gruff voice, declared to all visitors, that his master was not at home. " If I am ever so busy," said he, " I don't mind you ; because you make no botheration, and seldom stay long."

CHAPTER VI.

NUMEROUS PUBLICATIONS — DEATH OF LORD MELVILLE
AND PRESIDENT BLAIR — APPROACH OF PECUNIARY IN-
VOLVEMENTS.

THERE are many of his employments up to this date (1811) which I have left unnoticed. He edited and partly wrote so many volumes (*not to speak of contributions to periodicals*), that I doubt if a correct list has ever been made out. Of those usually noted, there were the "Somers' Tracts," in six volumes quarto, edited for Constable; "Northern Antiquities," made up, in partnership with Weber and R. Jamison, for John Ballantyne and Co., though not published till long after; and the work already mentioned, respecting the character and habits of King James VI., of which I am so stupid as to forget the title; but its contents were afterwards superseded by the lively portraiture of this eccentric monarch in the "Fortunes of Nigel." The Life and Works of Swift also partly occupied his attention, though the book did not appear till 1814. It was edited for Constable, who, for some time, complained bitterly that Scott had neglected him,

“having made a contract for a new edition of Swift, and, instead of fulfilling it, occupied himself in writing poems for other people.”

“Don Roderick,” which proved rather unpopular, was finished in May, and published in June; but at this period events occurred which affected his mind deeply. I allude to the almost simultaneous death of Lord Melville and President Blair, two friends whom, next to the Earl of Dalkeith, the Duke of Buccleuch, and Lord Somerville, he most loved and respected. The sudden loss of these two eminent men caused a great sensation in Scotland. I well remember being at an anniversary dinner party with Lord Melville and Mr. Scott, only a few months before his lordship's death; and never, certainly, was there spent a more jovial and happy evening. Lord Melville was then retired from public life; his enemies had endeavoured to fix a stigma on his character as a public office-bearer, but their attempts were defeated, and he retained the *mens sibi conscia recti*, together with all that vivacity of spirit which animated his former exertions. He was not in good health, being liable to some disorder in the circulation of the blood; on which account, his physicians advised that he should not ride on horseback, nor indulge in the pleasures of the table, nor even write and read, without great caution: to all which he answered

that "caution in regard to his health he never had adopted, and never would adopt; the vessel," said he, "must go, as usual, to the well till it breaks. I shall ride, walk, eat, drink, and work, as formerly, till the thread snaps; and whether this will happen soon or late, God only knows; but caution would be of little service." Certainly on that evening, whatever was his state of health, he did not trouble himself with any medical rules. He joined, though moderately, in a bowl of punch, after his usual portion of wine had been finished; also joined heartily in the chorus of every song, sat to an *early* hour, and looked like one who might live for, at least, other twenty years. His death was very sudden, owing, I believe, to some organic disease of the heart, which no medical advice or treatment could alleviate. To President Blair's peculiarities of character I have already alluded. His death was equally sudden, and was not preceded by any indications of illness. He had taken his usual afternoon walk, after the rising of the court, and on his return fell down in an apoplectic fit, which proved rapidly mortal.

* * * * *

In 1811, also, after the brief experience of about two years, it appeared that the house of John Ballantyne and Co. was not likely to prove a lucrative establishment. With the sole ex-

ception of the author of "Marmion," Constable had secured and contrived to keep the assistance of every literary character of high repute in Scotland. Besides, the "Edinburgh Review" was then in its glory; and so great was the admiration bestowed on this quarterly pamphlet, that its proprietor even, on that account alone, ranked as the *facile princeps* of Scottish publishers. In the old book department, too, he sold more volumes in a month than his opponent could get rid of in a year. In short, one shop was like a fashionable west end lounge; and the other, like an old established and opulent warehouse in the city. But the genius of John Ballantyne was not easily defeated: though always an invalid, he had the art of invariably keeping up buoyant spirits; put the best face on every thing; would talk as boldly as if he had fifty thousand at command, when, perhaps, he was, for the moment, puzzled how to retire a bill of only fifty pounds; kept his blood-horses, and rode out every day on Leith Sands or elsewhere, returning to a late dinner and bottle of old port; which habits, he said, were not only agreeable in themselves, but absolutely requisite, according to the advice of his physician, for the recovery of his health. Then, over a glass of wine, he would, with the animation of a boy of fifteen, draw such castles in the air, founded on literary

and bookselling speculations, that if only one tower of a single edifice could have been realised, he would certainly have proved himself the first publisher in the world. Sir Walter was greatly amused with these eccentricities in the bookseller, for whom he had a sincere and lasting regard; but looked rather grave when, on an inspection of the balance-sheet, it appeared that, although brilliant prospects shone at a distance, yet the expenditure of the house hitherto exceeded its income.

This year the author of "Marmion" expressed more than usual gladness, when the summer session closed and he could escape to his country residence of Ashestiel, where he had now the additional amusement of riding across every day to see how the improvements advanced at Abbotsford. He cherished that innate love of the country, which has so often been found combined with the most distinguished talents, both in ancient and modern times; and, on escaping from Edinburgh wearied and dispirited, would, after a single day's enjoyment of mountain air, awake, as it were, to new life. The plans at Abbotsford (so it was now denominated) occupied a great share of his attention, and it does not appear that he engaged much in literary composition: though every autumn (his favourite season in the country) generally suggested some

new plot. But he had so much of editorship, antiquarian research, and bibliography, always on hand, that his time was amply employed. During the spring of the following year he removed with his family from Ashestiel ("long his summer cabin, which he did not quit without regret") to Abbotsford.

CHAPTER VII.

REMARKS ON AUTHORSHIP—COMMERCIAL RESPONSIBILITY—
CONVERSATIONS ON BIBLIOGRAPHY—ROBEY.

OF all pursuits on earth from which one can derive pecuniary advantage, none is so precarious as bookmaking, for which there are many obvious reasons. Not merely bread and wearing apparel, but diamond rings and necklaces, gold snuff-boxes, and ten thousand other productions of human industry become recognised as necessaries of life in civilised society, but poems and romances *never*. At all events, there is nothing put down under this head for indispensable allowances in a household. Jack, John, or Sir John (as his rank may be), the father of the family, I take for granted is rich, but he has no time to read such fantastic trumpery, not he: besides, books only bother him; and if Miss Delia, or Miss Clementina, has actually acquired the wicked, idle taste for poems and novels, she must tax herself for a subscription to the nearest circulating library, or borrow the books from some far less opulent friend; but, to suppose that a new metrical

romance, price two or three guineas (which was not extraordinary in 1812), will be passed over in her audit like the price of a new gown, or even a pair of diamond earrings, is out of the question. *A poet*, whose quarto volume costs a high price, is not from the first looked on with the most favourable eye by a rich purchaser; and to repeat the experiment frequently, with the same sort of wares, will never do; he must contrive something entirely new, both in style and materials, otherwise the chances turn against him.*

The extraordinary success which had attended Scott's literary efforts, had by this time involved him in actual difficulties, or, at least, brought him into danger; though to others, and perhaps to himself, he appeared altogether prosperous. Detecting, with great sagacity, the weaknesses and blunders which caused the failure of other authors, he yet possibly relied far too much on

* Portrait-painters, sculptors, musicians, and actors, have, in some respects, a great advantage over authors. There is no great importance usually attached to the price of a new book, but there is immense gratification to vanity in having one's own picture stuck up at the exhibition; and as to concert-rooms and theatres, they are places of meeting for purposes very different from that of merely watching the performance; and where (as in churches,) people meet to see and to be seen, and carry on the business of life.

his already acquired "empire over the minds of the people," as a means of securing wealth, as well as reputation. In all probability he, therefore, seldom paused to reflect on the commercial responsibility which he had incurred with the Messrs. Ballantyne, who were his old friends and schoolfellows, or on his own expenditure, which far exceeded his professional income. Moreover, land had been purchased; further purchases were intended; architects, masons, painters, carpenters, gardeners, *designers*, and *drainers*, were all at work, and must be paid. But the star of his good fortune was supposed to be still in the ascendant. He himself modestly ascribed the favour of the public to *chance*, rather than to his own superior merits; but then the prize had been won, and on the continued possession of this public favour depended the possibility of carrying through the expensive plans he had begun, and meeting the engagements he had formed.

In the summer of 1812, I happened to reside in Princes Street; and he called frequently on his way from the parliament-house. Increased ill health precluded my acceptance of his kind invitations to Castle Street, and he used to derive amusement from looking over a quantity of old books, which I had then selected from a very large collection in the possession of Mr.

Blackwood. One afternoon I expressed great vexation at the bookseller having sold to Mr. Erskine of Mar, the autograph letters of Lady Grange, during her extraordinary captivity in St. Kilda, although the purchaser obtained the documents with the avowed purpose of destroying them. "They will not be so completely destroyed as you think," replied he; "for I looked carefully over them, and made a jotting of the most remarkable passages. But I cannot quite agree with you in being so angry with Blackwood, or with Mr. Erskine of Mar, for wishing to suppress papers which are any thing but creditable to his ancestors. Our antiquarian zeal as collectors must not be allowed to trespass on private feeling." At this time, with the kindest intentions, Sir Walter urgently recommended such literary employment on reprints and old manuscripts as, without requiring much labour, would yet fill up the whole day, and absorb attention. On the same principle, he greatly praised some stanzas in the Spenserian measure, which I had recently elaborated. "Reflect," said he, "whether these lines were not written, as I imagine, *con amore*, and without any worrying reflections what people would say of them? Depend on it, no one does any good as a poet, unless he has courage to make such a bold plunge, as will oblige him to forget all

the world, and even himself, in his subject. It is only in this way that literature acts as an effectual *sedative* for irritability, and *stimulant* for our better faculties. As to apprehensions of bad health, if sedentary employments do not agree, then ride, walk, shoot, fish, *delve* the garden, or break stones on the highway. Do all these things with might and main, but never allow the mind to prey on itself, and raise idle phantoms; in a word, never despond, which is the mere result of laziness and ennui."

In 1813 appeared "Rokeby," which cost him infinitely more trouble than any of his former poems, and was more highly finished; yet, notwithstanding high praise from the best judges, proved comparatively a failure. This may seem paradoxical, yet is easily explained. Under the heavy responsibilities already mentioned, was it possible, during the composition of this poem, to avoid certain disagreeable feelings of constraint, which are injurious to any author, and to Scott were particularly irksome? His existing popularity, and the engagements he had formed on the faith of its continuance, now absolutely forced him into the situation which he had always deprecated, and, as we have just seen, advised his friends to guard against; namely, that of being obliged to write with anxiety for the result, and to look on literary

employment as a trade rather than an amusement. In the production of every line or stanza, he felt that the public eye was upon him, and expected something superexcellent; and so painful and injurious was the impression, that on this ground alone it is easy to account for the pleasure he afterwards took in writing his romances under an assumed name, and the veil of mystery.

“Rokeby” has ample proof of that power which, more or less, appeared in all his productions; but let it be compared with the three former poems, and I suspect it will be found decidedly inferior in that natural spirit and raciness which they exhibit. It was, in truth, *task-work*; and so he frequently confessed to me during its composition. “I *must* turn,” said he, “the three hundredth page; and, *heu me miserum*, have only arrived at two hundred and ten! I assure you, I am so sick-tired of this *growsome* tale, that I can hardly persuade myself to drag it on any further.”

On a Sunday, which was always a busy time, I called on him to return an old and valuable manuscript, and apologised for my intrusion. “Never mind,” said he, “enter and welcome! When you last called, I was in a hobble, very tired, and almost thought I should never see the end of ‘Rokeby;’ but *now* I have got so

near land, that I feel quite lightsome and rejoiced. By way of *finale*, I was only committing a few murders, an occupation in which surely no man has any moral right to complain of being interrupted by a friend!"

CHAPTER VIII.

JOHN PINKERTON AND HIS TRAGEDY — DISPUTES ON RELIGION — OPINIONS OF SIR WALTER SCOTT THEREON — UNPUBLISHED APOLOGUE OF STERNE.

IN the beginning of 1813, after the publication of "Rokeby," I had the honour of several visits from Sir Walter. His first call that year was to request that an epilogue might be written for Mr. Pinkerton's forthcoming tragedy of "Finella, Countess of Strathearn" (or some such name), an abominable production, although the infatuated vanity of the author led him to confide in its being superlative, and that by this means he would rank in the first class of Scottish poets. In point of *idleness*, no one in Edinburgh could be better fitted for such an office. I had nothing else to do, and therefore sent an epilogue next morning, but of such disproportionate length, that Sir Walter doubted if Mrs. Henry Siddons would have patience to learn half of it, not to speak of the audience who had to listen. "However," continued he, "it is all the better. Old *Pinky Winky* is delighted, and says it glows with genuine poetry, which compliment is paid

merely because he imagines, however erroneously, that you admire his productions. As for the epilogue, let it rest as it now is; for, be assured, it never will be wanted." Accordingly, the play proceeded well enough till the third act, when the audience, becoming convinced that both plot and dialogue were equally objectionable, the rest of this grand classical tragedy turned into farce, and no epilogue was needed.

The character of Sir Walter was always well brought out when placed in the neighbourhood of unmanageable, wayward people, to which class Pinkerton certainly belonged, having all the weaknesses and caprices of genius, with a very slender proportion of its contrasting strength. Old "Pinky" was generally very quiet and *humdrum* in the mornings; but after dinner, provided he met with good wine, became not only disputatious and sarcastic, but waspish and vindictive in his expressions. On such occasions, he now and then indulged in sneers against religion, a subject which Sir Walter never introduced into table-talk, though he bore with it patiently. Unluckily, however, Pinkerton, by this means, once roused an opponent who was as remarkable for indiscreetly managed zeal in defence of religion, as the antiquary for his aversion to it. One casual remark was enough to excite this individual (a truly good and pious

lady,) to absolute wrath, which she would have thought it a sin to suppress. Perceiving that his monitrix had lost temper, Pinkerton quietly replenished his glass, and answered her reproofs with the most sarcastic *nonchalance*; which, considering the effect it produced, became quite intolerable. Sir Walter could have stopped "old Pinky" with a single word, but it was now altogether beyond his power to quiet the lady, who remained proof against every effort that he made to change the conversation. At last a musical genius, who was of the party, came to his aid by volunteering an entirely new song, which had the desired effect; and afterwards, care was taken to engage Pinky in an animated discussion respecting the carved obelisks at Meigle and Aberlemno, thus restoring him to perfect good humour.

Among remarkable traits in Sir Walter's character is to be reckoned, that whilst his own conduct was ever most exemplary, yet, in the eye of ignorant or censorious observers, he might appear to be of no religion. But, though worthy of remark, this trait is assuredly not singular; for, has it not often been the case with individuals (I speak of the laity), who had the deepest sense of religious and moral duty, that they talked least on the subject, and never obtrusively *paraded* their sentiments and opinions?

On this subject, I shall here venture to transcribe a few sentences from a private letter of a highly valued friend, who will, I am confident, excuse the liberty :

“ Spiritually speaking, religion applies to another world ; and viewed practically as a guide in this material sphere, how can it so well be cultivated, as by efforts, however humble and inadequate, to fulfil those duties unequivocally enjoined by the divine Founder of our faith ? Will those who are fully occupied with the *practice* of religion, have either time or inclination for *theoretical* speculations, or controversial discussion ? It *may* be with the best intentions that some people, who are reckoned devout, do make a parade of piety. It *may* be with the purest motives that they attend church twice every Sunday ; that they sit in their drawing-rooms reading large Bibles ; that they lecture all their acquaintances, and insist on regular attendance at family-worship. But, alas ! we also know that all this may be done, and is done, by the most worthless hypocrites, who assume the semblance of devotion as easily as they could fling a white garment over a black one ; whereas, on the contrary, self-denial, generosity, benevolence, and other active virtues, which tend to good results in this world, by no means admit of being counterfeited or assumed. How clearly

are the distinctions marked betwixt moral good and moral evil! Yet some infidel writers (Helvetius for example) have attached wonderous importance to the sophistical aphorism, that all mortals are in reality actuated by the *same* principles, only differently developed; and that virtue is but *selfishness* under another name. So far as there is truth in these assertions, it amounts merely to the fact, that all mortals, *in one shape or another*, aim at happiness, which it would be useless to dispute. But is there no distinction to be drawn betwixt those who place their happiness in slavish obedience to mere animal instinct, and those who are happy in strenuous, though painful efforts, to obey the mandates of reasoning conscience, which, with instinct, is almost perpetually at war? Is there no difference of principles, as well as of conduct, betwixt the individual devoted to pursuits, the tendency of which he well knows to be *narrow, exclusive, and centered in self*; and another who sacrifices personal and selfish feelings, perhaps even life, for the promotion of motives which tend to the good of others, and deserve *universal* adoption? When Sir Philip Sidney, mortally wounded, and dying of thirst, desired the water that was brought to him to be handed first to the wounded soldier, are his principles and motives to be considered the same with those of a man who would instantly

drink up the water, and refuse even the earnest prayer of his companion in arms to spare him a drop? The one aims at virtue, and finds his happiness in the fulfilment of duty, however painful; the other aims at happiness or gratification; but, as to virtue, is wholly indifferent. There are texts enough in Scripture, of which the import cannot be misunderstood: for example, 'Not every one who says Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven.' The flippant sarcasm of the French philosopher loses all its force when aimed against the gratification arising from efforts to fulfil the Divine will, of which one leading maxim is, 'Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you;' nor can such efforts be made without painful sacrifices, and resistance to those sensual impulses and motives of *merely individual interest*, which properly deserve the stigmatising epithet of selfish."

Thus far my correspondent; and whatever the reader may think of so long a sermon, I believe its application to the subject of this memoir will be sufficiently obvious. Sir Walter, it is true, seldom went to church, and never engaged in religious controversy; yet, by whom were the *intrinsic* duties insisted on in the above extract more perseveringly fulfilled? He did

not *hear* many sermons ; however, in the year 1827, he *wrote* two, for the sole purpose of benefitting a *protégé*, who was then struggling with difficulties, and whom he could not, as it might have been in former years, assist with ready money.

Yet, one more digression, which will not be quite *mal à propos* ! In a portfolio of old autographs, I have seen an original apologue, or parable of Sterne's, which, for obvious reasons, the author never published. The sketch introduces two zealots at an ale-house, furiously engaged in a religious controversy. At length, one of them is so irritated, that he proposes to refer the matter under discussion to a third party, who has hitherto smoked his pipe at the chimney-corner in profound silence. This person refuses the office of umpire, declaring that he himself is of no religion. They both express horror at the confession, and shrink from him. Meanwhile, the landlord comes in, shaking the snow from his hat, for it is a wild winter night, and describes a scene of great misery, which he had just witnessed. A poor family (whom he particularises by name and residence), have just then been deprived of all by a hard-hearted land-steward, whilst three of them are ill of a fever ; and the father, a proud-hearted, honest man, has not a penny to bestow on them, and looks on

their dying pangs in silence, rather than submit to beggary, though his heart is wrung. "D—— it!" says the landlord, "I could hardly stand this, and would have liked to give the rascally bailiff a thrashing, for poor Jones was once a good customer. Is it not hard, gentlemen?" "Very!" replied the religious disputants, continuing their controversy, and drawing nearer to the fire. Meanwhile, the silent gentleman of no religion having marked every word, had flung his pipe into the fire, and marched silently away to the scene of action. The conclusion may be guessed. Within the next two hours, and before the theological dispute ends, he supplies the destitute family with money, finds them a doctor, replaces the furniture, and leaves them in comparative comfort.

Perhaps a very erroneous moral might be drawn from all this; but, whatever were Sterne's faults, he was no infidel; and the story, like divers parts of "Tristram Shandy," was intended to convey a justifiable and bitter satire on the ways of the world, wherein canting disputatious pretenders harangue about the outward observances of religion, and mysteries of faith, whilst the *practice* of Christian charity, and all other active virtues, is left for those who make no professions or pretensions whatever.

These, it may be said, are *truisms*, but not, on that account, the less important; for truisms are like the sunlight, common to all, yet inestimable, and too often misused, or neglected! My digressions, however, are too long.

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CHAPTER IX.

BIBLIOGRAPHY—THE LAIRD OF BONNYMOON IN HIS LIBRARY
—INADEQUATE SUCCESS OF ROKEBY —LORD OF THE ISLES
— LIFE AND WORKS OF SWIFT —BRIDAL OF TRIERMALN,
AND HAROLD THE DAUNTLESS.

IN 1813, as already said, I had frequent visits from Sir Walter; for, in those days, bibliography formed a sort of bond of union between collectors, even when in other respects dissimilar in character: and I had recently moved all the books and pictures of which I was possessed, from the country to a large house in the new town, where they occupied several apartments. The black letter treasures were well arranged; but, on one occasion, he wished to find out a now-forgotten novel, entitled "Santo Sebastiano," which had been placed with a great quantity of miscellaneous books in an anteroom; and, on entering this repertory, it was discovered that part of the shelves had broken down, and the books were strewed about the floor. This occurrence led him, perhaps for the first time in his life, to the mere repetition of a story, already well known, and which came into vogue from the royal appro-

bation bestowed on it, when repeated by a most entertaining *bon vivant* to King George IV. However, he did give, as usual, an improved version. At starting, he described how the rain beat, the wind blew, and the mist settled on the Grampian Hills, on a cold October morning; and the laird proposed to his guest that, as the *day* was so awfully bad, they should "*steek* the shutters, light the candles, and, over a bowl of punch, try what kind of a *night* it wad make." Then, how "Sandy Hunter" inquired whether the laird had any books to beguile the time in such disastrous weather, and was told that there existed indeed a large library, which the laird's ancestors had collected and arranged; but, for his own part, he found always more reading than he could manage in the newspapers. Thereafter, at Sandy's earnest request, a visit to this neglected repository, where the contents (so runs the story) were luckily formed into distinct classes, Greek, Latin, foreign and domestic, historical, legal, medical, *et cetera*. Then the laird's decided and most laughable objections severally to every department, without exception, of literary research; his anathemas against the productions of Spain, France, and Italy, "as if we had not buiks enough of our own, without meddling with such foreneger trash;" his vehement aversion to Greek, because the "*vera karakters* were no readable;"

his maledictions on Latin, because he had not forgotten the useless floggings it cost him at school; his contempt for medical science, because "every man knew that air and exercise, with gude meat and drink, were better than doctors' drogs; and that if these wad not do, the rest was all humbug;" his conviction that historians, "because they never agreed, had nothing but imposition and lies among them;" his dislike to modern books, because, "if the auld ones were stupit, the new were waur;" the absolute horror he expressed, when his bibliographical guest came to the *legal* department. "Hech, man!" cried he, "lay down that black deevil of a buik! Let sleeping dogs lie; for law's waur than the black art, and it wad be a blessing if a' the lawyers' buiks (and themselves too!) were brunt by the hangman."

Lastly, for the climax—the peroration—the catastrophe! When "Sandy Hunter" lifted up his hands and eyes in amazement at a division where the books presented a most extraordinary appearance, and where he vainly tried to pull out the mutilated remains of a valuable *editio princeps*—

"Ay," says the laird, "I see ye're admiring how *snod* the library looks there. Ye ken it's an auld house, and the books were so weighty, that in that corner of the room the whole of the

skelves cam to an accident and fell down ; so I was necessitated to send for John Spales, the wright, a vera industrious, neat-handed callant, and he directly mended up the *skelves*. But, when he tried to fill them again, some deevil had gotten among the buiks, for the skelves were not wide nor side enough to hold them ; so John (he's an ingenious clever lad !) was resolved to make a handsome job. He ranged the buiks on the floor, and measured them wi' his ruler ; but when he fand that they wad by no possibility fit, I said he had better take the saw to them. Then he sawed an inch off the folios, half an inch off the quartos, and a quarter off the twelvemos ; garred them fit, and drave them down to the wall wi' his mell. It will be lang to the day before I try to pull any of them out again !”

Notwithstanding the unfavourable circumstances above noticed, respecting “Rokeby,” its circulation was very extensive, nor did good judges fall to express their admiration. As to the words somewhere imputed to the proprietor of the Rokeby estates, that the book sold merely on account of the author's name on the title-page, I should think Mr. Morritt (than whom Scott had no friend more sincerely attached) was about the last individual on earth to make any such remark ; but the publishers no longer heard such cordial praise from all, and even

unexpected quarters, as accompanied each of the preceding poems. However, the indomitable and inexhaustible genius of Scott was not to be daunted by *one* poetical failure. "It was possible," he said, "though he did not quite understand the matter, that he resembled the parson who could not preach except in his own pulpit, and had erred by laying the scene on English ground; he would, therefore, try in the next instance another Scottish campaign." With great energy and expedition, therefore, he produced the "Lord of the Isles," the longest and most elaborate of his metrical romances, and which appeared the very next year after the failure of "Rokeby." But the spell was now broken. I doubt if the "Lord of the Isles" brought much profit either to author or publisher, though, as a matter of course, the quarto was immediately followed by an octavo edition. The house of Ballantyne and Co. had undertaken some heavy works of other authors; such, for example, as Dr. Jameson's "History of the Culdees," which brought no returns. Their capital was much impaired, and, in the winter of 1814-5, it was found necessary to make an effort in order to avoid bankruptcy. On this occasion Scott accepted the pecuniary aid which was offered by friends, and which, to the uttermost fraction, he soon afterwards repaid; and Mr. Ballantyne very

judiciously sold off by auction the whole of his antiquarian and general stock, which realised a good sum, giving out that, in future, he intended to confine himself exclusively to the wholesale and publishing departments. The affairs of the house were thus creditably, and without any exposure, arranged; and, not long afterwards, Mr. John Ballantyne started as a book auctioneer, an employment which, in his hands, turned out very profitable.

As a publisher, therefore, though Ballantyne did not retire from the trade, Constable now had the field almost entirely to himself; and, in the first place, obtained from Mr. Scott the fulfilment of his existing contract with regard to the "Life and Works of Swift," in nineteen volumes. After this appeared the "Bridal of Triermain" and "Harold the Dauntless," which upon the whole were coldly received; though, probably, these are the poems which, next to the "Lady of the Lake" and her two precursors, a good judge would, at this date, read over with most pleasure. There prevails in them a careless yet graceful freedom of manner and much poetic feeling; but they came into the world, in little unostentatious volumes, as works of an unknown author, obviously a good follower of Scott, and, perhaps, worthy to become his rival. But this was not enough; for, in hundreds of instances,

it has been proved that no book speculation can be more unprofitable than a merely *anonymous* poem, unless it be a personal satire, or there are influential friends of the author ready to point out its merits and ensure its circulation.

CHAPTER X.

PUBLICATION OF WAVERLEY—BENEVOLENCE—VAGARIES OF AN UNFORTUNATE LITTERATEUR—SIR WALTER SCOTT'S AVERSION TO SATIRE—TOLERANCE FOR THE FAULTS OF OTHERS.

"WAVERLEY," in three volumes, had been announced by John Ballantyne in 1811, and a sheet or two set in types: but there the matter stopped; and now, when Ballantyne had almost ceased to be a publisher, the main question was, how to induce Constable to carry on with effect the speculation which his opponent had begun? I well remember the coldness with which he at first treated the novel of "Waverley," and the judicious efforts made by Mr. James Ballantyne, the printer, in order to excite curiosity, and form a strong body of friends in its favour before publication. With this intent, some of the proof-sheets exemplifying the style, without betraying too much of the story, were, under promise of mutual confidence, put into the hands of Mr. Henry Mackenzie, Dr. Thomas Brown, Mrs. Fletcher, Mrs. Hamilton, and other *savans*, or *savantes*, whose *dicta* on the merits of a new

novel were considered unimpeachable. Their opinions being unanimous in its favour, Messrs. Constable and Cadell at last offered a sum for the copyright, which was declined, perhaps from some disgust at the caution they had previously shewn. Yet the booksellers were in the right. "Waverley" was an anonymous novel, and, had it not been for the powerful party of friends secured in its favour, and the curiosity afterwards excited by the impenetrable veil of mystery assumed by its author, it is quite possible that the book, with all its merits, might have shared the fate of "Harold the Dauntless," and the "Bridal of Triermain." This, however, was guarded against. The sale at first was not rapid; but those who purchased their copies, did not fail to read them, and all were delighted. The news eventually spread like wild-fire. An original novel had come out, actually better and more *piquant* than those of Mrs. Hamilton, Mrs. Brunton, or even Mr. Mackenzie himself, which were previously considered as displaying the *ne plus ultra* of Scottish contemporary excellence, and the plaudits were unbounded.

In this memoir I have frequently introduced egotism for the sole purpose of shewing how kindly Sir Walter interested himself in the fate of an idle and wayward student, whose ill health rendered him an object of commiseration;

though, in other respects, his circumstances might have been looked on as enviable. In the case of those who already had independent fortune, Scott always encouraged literary occupation, with the injunction that it should be looked on as an amusement merely, whilst he conscientiously dissuaded *the poor* against trusting to such employments for support. Hence, the advice once given to James Hogg, which the latter has commemorated in the "Queen's Wake," and which the good, though vain shepherd, actually imputed to jealousy and envy!! But how rare in the world are instances of men, greatly occupied and successful in their own pursuits, having, at the same time, any room left in their minds for sympathy with people whose habits are entirely different! For the most part, such exalted and active personages either will not or *cannot* enter into the feelings, whether painful or pleasant, of others who belong to a different class. Yet, of that benevolence and generosity, which ought always to form an integral part of the chivalrous and gentlemanly character, Sir Walter, as we have seen, possessed an uncommon share. In 1814 he expressed to me his regret for the distresses of a poor man, having a family to maintain, and who, contrary to the advice of all his friends, had given up a tolerable employment as a schoolmaster, pos-

sessed, like many others, with the unfortunate notion that he was born to be a great poet, although, in that respect, his power consisted merely in a facility of manufacturing smooth verses. "As an amanuensis," said Mr. Scott, "I would willingly recommend him to you, for he will gladly undergo any degree of labour; but I should advise, that you pay him only a stipulated and moderate sum per sheet; because, the greatest kindness that could be shewn, would be to wean him from literary schemes, which will never bring profit, and which the possession of money only enables him to indulge. My object is to get him devoted to such quiet drudgery as will bring a secure, though limited income; for such a person would be more fortunate as a cobbler in a stall, earning eighteen-pence per day, than excited as he now is by perpetual exertion and hopes, always ending in misery."

I observed, that the situation of a lawyer's clerk might easily be obtained.

"Very true; but he would consider it derogatory to the literary character. His best chance *now* would be as a private teacher in such branches of elementary knowledge as he has mastered, and one tithe of the labour and industry bestowed on his useless poems would fit him for obtaining a tolerable livelihood among

younger students of the university. With this view, a friend of mine got him some pupils, and he set out well enough, but after the first week began to read to them his own poetry, and they laughed at him."

I have introduced this page only for the sake of some *characteristic* remarks, which followed about a month afterwards, in regard to the same unfortunate *litterateur*.

"Pray look at this manuscript," said he, "it is a production which our friend, * * * * brought to me yesterday morning. He had, it seems, fished up from a book-stall a copy of the Rev. Hay Drummond's long-forgotten "Town Eclogue," became possessed with the notion, that he would, at length, succeed as a bitter satirist, and what has he done? — attacked not only public characters, including all the book-sellers, but private friends who have taken an interest in his behalf, but who did not act precisely as, in his wisdom, he wished and expected. Surely this propensity to bring a nest of hornets about one's own head, is about the worst and most absurd characteristic of the *genus irritabile*; and as they brew, so must they drink. Unfortunately for himself, too, (that is, supposing the performance should ever see the light), the poor fellow has not been unsuccessful. Spleen and mortified vanity, combined with

anxiety and sorrow, form, together, the ingredients for a sort of poison, which enables even the humblest creature to sting. There are passages here which, if read by the persons at whom they are aimed, would never be forgiven."

I felt inclined to plead for the scribbler. "In that case," I observed, "there must be a share of truth in his inuendos, and it is allowable, surely, for the poorest author to use the weapon of satire *where it is deserved.*"

"It is *desperately* inconvenient for himself, however; and, I think, by no means pardonable in a man who has a wife and children to protect, for by the use of this notable weapon he never fails to bring an old house about his ears. No, no! Personal satire, emanating from disappointment and spite, is rarely excusable. Besides, an author is, of all people in the world, the last who should provoke enmity and disturbance, because, for his own pursuits, he so much requires quiet. His mind ought to be like a placid lake, reflecting clearly the objects which imagination or observation presents to it, not a troubled ocean, "with itself at war." Besides, has not one of the best satirists observed, that the world is a great mad-house? If so, most people are deserving of pity rather than anger."

By these casual remarks, considerable light is thrown on one leading principle in Scott's character, which, considering the degree to which it was carried, might *almost* be looked on as a fault. He so resolutely determined to avoid the petty squabbles and prejudices of the so-styled "*genus irritabile*," that, maintaining perfect neutrality and independence, he was disposed to make allowances for the faults of all men, so long as their *delicta* did not become intolerably flagrant. Being, both by temperament and practice, of an extremely opposite disposition, I took occasion, sometimes, to represent to him, that Mr. White, Mr. Brown, or Mr. Black, had acted in a manner altogether inexcusable, and such as ought to be exposed. He would then reply, "Never mind the *exposure*. God help us all; and let us hope that these people will, as old Mrs. Macknight used to say, mend the tenour of their ways!" It was thus next to impossible to make him angry; for where others would have been irritated, he seemed to view the matter as calmly as an experienced physician would have looked on the vagaries of a poor patient in a fever. He deprecated the lampoon, because its effects were likely to be injurious to the poor author and his family, but had he found himself attacked in it, would not have entertained the slightest

resentment. From the height to which he had intellectually raised himself, he looked down calmly on the goings on of mankind, as unmoved by *anger* at their minor faults and errors, as if they had been so many puppets. The likeness to Goethe was here again apparent. Sir Walter's character being the very opposite of *Mephistophelian*, perhaps he wished not only to avoid the contemplation of evil, but almost to believe that it did not exist. I speak of *moral* evil; for as to worldly distress, or physical suffering, the most painful scenes in a hospital, poor-house, or prison, would not have deterred him from personal attendance, had it been in his power to render any assistance.

If it be supposed, from all this, that Scott could not be roused into the expression of just anger, and that his good nature knew no bounds, this would be a gross error; for, on certain occasions, no one could more sternly and effectively indicate his disapprobation. The comparison of the world to a mad-house was a mere illustrative quotation. Especially, too, I have derived entertainment from the precautionary, though decisive, measures he adopted to keep certain individuals who courted his society, at arm's length or cane's length. There were people at Edinburgh, some of them high in rank and station, whom he always distrusted

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and avoided. Among these was a certain noble earl, whom he looked on not merely as a tiresome egotist, but as an unfeeling selfish miser; and though they not unfrequently met together, yet no stratagem could produce an amalgam from such heterogeneous materials.

CHAPTER XI.

EFFECTS OF WAVERLEY—GUY MANNERING—THE ANTI-
QUARY—TALES OF MY LANDLORD—MISS EDGEWORTH—
VISIT TO WATERLOO IN 1815—NUMEROUS LITERARY
ENGAGEMENTS—RECOLLECTIONS OF SCOTT BY DR. LAP-
PENBERG.

BY the unexpected events of this year, 1814, the web of his destiny (if one may be allowed such an expression) was already woven, though he himself knew it not. The novel of Waverley became, in a short time, quite as successful, in its way, as any of the previous poems; indeed these three little volumes, which had been so easily written as a relaxation at leisure hours, actually proved more profitable than "Marmion," or the "Lady of the Lake." Situations of painful interest, good moral lessons, and a smooth elegant style, were to be found in the works of contemporary novelists, and Miss Edgeworth excelled in the delineation of Irish peculiarities. But the magnificent *living* portrait of the Baron of Bradwardine and his satellites, and the entirely new light in which the events of the memorable year 1745 were presented, opened a field for the lovers of novel-reading, such as

before had not even been dreamed of. One romance naturally led to another; as, in his own words with regard to poetry, "line suggested line, and stanza begot stanza." Thus, before "Waverley" had arrived at the third edition, he had composed great part of "Guy Manner-
ing," which appeared very early in the following year, and which, for vivid delineation of character and rapid succession of incident, proved infinitely more attractive than its precursor. Next season was published the "Anti-
quary," to which not one of the whole series is preferable; yet I remember stupid and illiterate readers, who could not relish Mr. Oldbuck's peculiar humour, asserting that this novel was "written with a worn-out pen." But, under the impression that the *third* novel, like the third poem, might prove the last which the public would favourably receive from one author, he, in the very same year (1816), brought out, under the *nomme de guerre* of Peter Pattison, the first four volumes of "Tales of my Landlord," which were intrusted for publication to Mr. Black-
wood, with whom he never before had any dealings, except in the purchase of old books. For a little while the *ruse* was so far successful, that the public did not rightly know what to make of the matter: it seemed highly improbable that any one author could produce original

novels with so much rapidity; and, as if to prove (if proof were wanting,) that anonymous merit, without a strong party in its favour, will not command success, these volumes, under Blackwood's management, did not at first circulate in a degree commensurate to their worth. The former friends, in this instance, were wanting; and people were not sure that the so styled new author might not actually be an interloper on the territories of their acknowledged favourite, the author of "Waverley." But, ere long, the most powerful voices were raised in approbation of the work.

Miss Edgeworth was, from the first, a most zealous partisan of the novels; which she, without hesitation, ascribed to the real author, pre-facing a long commendatory letter to Mr. Ballantyne, with the *jeu de mots*, "Aut SCOTUS aut DIABOLUS." (It is to be regretted, by the way, if this letter has not been preserved for publication). By unanimous suffrage, the "Landlord's Tales" were at length attributed to the author of "Waverley;" and were so much applauded, that he had good reason to confide in having opened a vein of inexhaustible and sterling ore, from which the supply would only increase the demand *ad infinitum*.

Meanwhile, in order to thicken the mystification, Scott, instead of being always at his

writing-desk, as might have been expected of so voluminous an author, seemed to have his time perfectly at command for the routine, either of business or amusement. "Three hours *per diem*," as he often observed, "are quite enough for literary labour, if only one's attention is kept quite undistracted; and the best time for this is in the morning, when other people are asleep." But, as a further means of concealment, he perseveringly carried on his other literary employments, went to visit the field of Waterloo in 1815, and published his observations on the Continent in an octavo volume, entitled "Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk." He wrote, also, the "Field of Waterloo," a poem; but the effort was not a happy one. He contributed an elaborate Introduction to "Border Antiquities," in two volumes quarto; prepared several articles for Constable's new edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica" (one of the bookseller's great *national* works), and the letter-press descriptions to "Provincial Antiquities and Picturesque Scenery of Scotland," besides contributions to reviews, magazines, &c.

By permission of a highly-valued correspondent, I shall here introduce some paragraphs which occur in a letter just received from Dr. Lappenberg, formerly Hanseatic Minister at Berlin, and now Archivarius at Hamburgh.

July 16th, 1836.

“ The image of Sir Walter Scott forms one of the most delightful recollections of my earlier years. It arises from that period when, as a student at Edinburgh, I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance. I remember how he received the young German at his house in Castle Street, with that meek grace spread over his mighty genius, like the transparent cloud through which mortals can gaze less unsteadily at the sun ! At that first interview, he took occasion to express his pleasure in having an opportunity of acknowledging to one of Germany’s youngest and unknown sons, the obligations he felt under to our national literature. Never shall I forget the affability with which I was met in that hall crowded with targets, claymores, and guns ; a degree of attention and kindness suitable rather for a distinguished stranger than a humble student ; whilst, at the same time, Mr. Scott’s demeanour, instead of being like that of a ‘ great lion,’ or ‘ literary Colossus,’ might have answered well for the lowly Vicar of Wakefield ! So marked, yet so unaffected, was this humility, that one might suppose the ‘ Great Unknown ’ was still unknown to himself. Yet, at this period, he had already published all his best poetry, and the earlier, in my humble opinion the best, of his novels.

“ I remember Mr. Scott at various dinner-parties, comprising persons of very different habits and tastes, yet all of whom were unanimous in expressing their delight at the impressions left by his conversation. If I may be allowed the metaphor, I would say his discourse resembled one of the brilliant waterfalls of Switzerland, or his own beloved country; not only because it never ceased to be powerful and resplendent, but because, in common with those sublime works of nature, it owed nothing of its effect to art or artifice, and possessed the same magical influence over *every* human heart. I remember him at the houses of his more congenial friends, like yourself, cheered and animated still more by the sparks of genius radiating from convivial associates, old Henry Mackenzie, Mr. William Erskine, Mr. Adam Ferguson, the Wilsons, James Ballantyne, and others, whose names do not at the moment occur to me. I remember him sitting for hours in company with Mrs. Grant of Laggan, and other venerable persons, endeavouring to revive their recollections of times long gone by, and enjoying the reminiscences of their youth apparently more than they themselves did (the poet's privilege), and rendering them so happy to be able to tell him some historical or biographical trait that had hitherto escaped his researches! Though a foreigner, and

at that time not much versed in British, much less Scotch history, I never felt more interested than when he spoke on this favourite theme. The spirit of Herodotus seemed transfused into the Scotch poet. I ought not to omit, in my remembrances of him, the kindness he evinced to a poor countryman of mine, Henry Weber.

“ But no recollection is more lively and vivid than that of a voyage I had the good fortune to make in his society from Edinburgh to London. He had the kindness, when he heard of my intention of going thither, to suggest that I should take my passage in the same vessel, and be of his party, which consisted of his daughter, Mr. William Erskine, and a few other intimate friends. He had brought with him Dolinger's ‘Alexis von Mainz,’ and some other German poems, with the intention of looking them over with me. But the inexhaustible attractions and liveliness of his conversation did not allow us to make any progress in reading. He had not read much of German poetry, but had profoundly studied some of the best; and had, if I mistake not, translated Goethe's ‘Egmont,’ and various poems of Bürger, which he never published. During the voyage, he often spoke of his intention to visit the field of the battle of Leipsig, and to write a poem about it; but he contented himself, I believe, with the battle of Waterloo.

Mr. Erskine kept awake his interest in Scotch historical anecdotes, being himself profound in that lore. Miss Scott gave us some delightful Scotch songs, especially some old Jacobite ones, which her father cherished beyond all others. Mr. Erskine having observed, that the printing of such ballads within British territory, was contrary to law, Mr. Scott directly suggested that Mr. König was then on board of our vessel with one of his newly-invented printing presses, which were afterwards employed at newspaper-offices in London. He insisted that, as the learned counsellor (so he styled Mr. Erskine,) had interdicted the printing of these *memorabilia* on shore, there was now an excellent opportunity of putting some of them to press on the lawless sea, for which purpose he requested the assistance of the German artist. Thus some copies of 'Over the water, and over the sea,' with two or three of the same class, were actually printed off *Scarborough Head*, as expressed at the bottom of the leaf, which I still possess among my *keimelia*.

“ The most remarkable circumstance, however, attending our passage, is, that on the second evening a storm was threatening, of which the younger and inexperienced passengers were kept ignorant. We were sent early to the cabin; and, from the rolling of the vessel, and great

noise on deck, I spent a very restless and uncomfortable night. Next morning I learned from the captain, Mr. Erskine, and others, that the storm had been a very dangerous one. The captain, mate, and crew, had lost all self-possession, and nearly despaired. Mr. Scott, however, had remained on deck during all the commotion, assuming the part of the 'pilot who weathered the storm;' and to his inflexible courage and steadiness, his persuasive and energising eloquence, the vessel and her passengers owed their narrow escape.

"Upon our arrival in London (1815), Mr. Scott was immediately drawn into the vortex of fashionable society. I never afterwards had the good fortune to meet this most amiable man and distinguished luminary of modern literature, but always felt deeply interested, as I do now, in recalling the image of that Sun, which then set to me, not to rise again on this side of the grave."

CHAPTER XII.

PECUNIARY INVOLVEMENTS — THE BILL SYSTEM — PROFITS OF THE NOVELS — UNPARALLELED INDUSTRY — ENTHUSIASM FOR LANDSCAPE GARDENING.

I HAVE said above, that the web of Scott's destiny was now woven, though he himself knew it not; and in these words I alluded to pecuniary difficulties, which, in his case, as it has happened in numberless others, took their actual rise and commencement at the very time when he seemed to be most prosperous. The author of "Waverley" lived on a scale of liberal, if not profuse expenditure. His family having grown up, increased his disbursements. He had begun, and was resolved to finish, his mansion of Abbotsford; besides, he wished to purchase more land, to which plans his official income was unequal. But in Constable he now found a ready supporter, who, at last, proved his ruin. The bargains with this bookseller were now almost invariably made through Mr. James Ballantyne, the printer, who himself mainly depended on Constable's aid. I believe the latter was kept in ignorance who had written the Waverley

novels till some years later, when concealment became out of the question.

Having thus alluded to James Ballantyne, I must observe, that *a character of more sterling integrity, or more friendly disposition, never existed.* As he was by no means of an over sanguine temperament, it is possible that, by following his advice, the subsequent pecuniary embarrassments might have been avoided. But printers live by booksellers, and Constable's wealth and sagacity were then looked on as unimpeachable. Even till within a few weeks or days before his bankruptcy, his real circumstances were concealed from all the world except the bankers, whose only chance of indemnity depended on keeping the secret. Yet by this time (1816), it is probable that the bookseller was himself in difficulties far greater, had the truth been told, than those which induced John Ballantyne to become an auctioneer. To counterbalance this, however, he had a host of powerful friends, and ample credit, therefore could discount bills at the Scotch banks to almost any extent. The large sums necessarily embarked in great literary undertakings — encyclopedias, statistical accounts, histories, &c., which, he delighted to say, were of national importance, and which brought slow, though sure returns, — this alone afforded him a ready and plausible apology for

having recourse to the bill system, which, perhaps, no one with a capital equally slender, ever carried on to so great an extent. Very soon did Constable perceive the advantage he could derive in this branch of his operations through his connexion with Sir Walter Scott, provided only the latter would adopt, or sanction, the bill system also; and, unfortunately, through the mediation of Mr. Ballantyne, who, with the most honourable intentions, was himself deceived as to the bookseller's circumstances, the author of "Waverley" was induced to do so. The novels were extremely profitable; so were the earlier poems, of which new editions were constantly called for, and remuneration must be made. Constable and Co. had no great stock of hard cash, but would liberally accept Mr. Scott's draft (or that of Mr. Ballantyne, as representative of the "Great Unknown,") for 5000*l.* at twelve months, provided the poet would only endorse another for a like amount, or, perhaps, for only 3000*l.* which would be, *pro tempore*, of service to the bookseller, who had a convenient opportunity to discount it at a different bank, or, perhaps, through a private friend. Meanwhile, in return for this accommodation-system, Constable was a most discreet, politic, and indefatigable trumpeter of the praises, both of Sir Walter Scott, and the unknown author of

“Waverley;” that is to say, he gave out that the sale of their works was enormous; and, by mysterious hints, made it be understood that the purchase-money of a Waverley romance was never less than 8000*l.* or 10,000*l.*; at which rate, taking the lower average, the whole series of novels (independently of other literary productions) must have brought to the author two hundred thousand pounds! *At best*, the trade, or amusement, whichever it is to be called, of authorship, will not yield returns like this: but, if people believed it, so much the better; and as to the sale of these novels being altogether unprecedented, there could be no doubt. The public were mystified; bankers, and even booksellers, were mystified; and, probably, those who were behind the scenes, and ought to have understood the matter, were mystified also. That the author himself was so, there could be no doubt, otherwise he never would have acted on principles which ultimately led to his becoming an absolute martyr.

After the publication of “Waverley,” and for the last seventeen years of his life, Scott was so constantly before the eye of the public as an author, and so watched in all his movements, that it may seem superfluous to make any remarks on his literary career. Reckoning the number of volumes that he produced in this

space of time, and considering, not merely their bulk, but the quality of the composition, it may be doubted if there is any individual on record who would even stand a comparison with him in point of literary energy. I shall at present name only the *seventy-four* volumes of original romances; but, if the histories, biographies, poems, critiques, and newspaper articles of the same period, were all reckoned up, and it is remembered how much of every day was given to other employments, I believe that, on reflection, the facts of the case will appear hardly less than miraculous. Those readers at least who, in this book-making age, are themselves accustomed to literary labour, will not think this expression exaggerated. He wrote nearly as much as any religious scribe of the middle ages (who *lived only to write*) could have accomplished, and yet appeared to live only for the every day and conflicting duties of the world. Besides, in order to prove successful, the composition of novels *must* be "easy reading;" but, alas! it is not always *easy writing*. On the "*toujours perdrix*" principle, to complete twenty-four, or even twelve pages of an original story *every day*, whilst many other laborious tasks are, also, to be fulfilled, becomes at last a very formidable engagement. When contradicting, as usual, the assertion that Scott was the author of "Waverley," James Ballan-

tyne used to add, "It was inconceivably strange that people should insist on fathering these novels on an individual who obviously and clearly had no time for any such employment!"

In order to counteract the injurious effects of so much application, he used, when at Abbotsford, a great deal of exercise. The frequent change of air and scenery from Edinburgh to Tweedside, and *vice versa*, was very beneficial; and the training of his young plantations alone proved a constant source of amusement out of doors. By no landed proprietor, perhaps, was the passion ever so strongly entertained to have goodly trees of his own rearing; and, if he had not been able to add by purchase the neighbouring hills to his original farm, I almost believe he would have requested permission of the owners to plant the grounds for the mere pleasure of the occupation, and to beautify the landscape. He even trenched the ground in which his trees were set, in order to quicken their growth; coaxed, pruned, weeded, and watched them, until with great glee, in 1815 (having begun in 1811), he observed, "I am not just arrived at the point of saying that I can *walk* under the shade of my own trees, but I could *lie* under their shade, at all events; and this is something!"

CHAPTER XIII.

CONVIVIAL HABITS — MORAL SUPERIORITY — ABSENCE OF MIND, OR ABSTRACTION — REMARKS ON THE NOVELS.

WITH all these advantages, a malady was now lurking in his frame, which, in 1818, gave the first severe shock to his otherwise powerful constitution. The vexatious attendance at the parliament-house, cheerfully as he bore it, ill accorded with literary pursuits. He used always, at two o'clock, to walk home from court to his own residence, and sometimes did complain that, for the rest of the day, he was too much "jaded" either for work or exercise. Yet, when alone, he resumed his labours, though ready at all times to bear a share in social and convivial duties, to which I often thought he made more than sufficient sacrifices. He was, it is true, particularly temperate; though, looking at his careless and jovial aspect over a glass of champagne with congenial friends, one might suppose him a *bon-vivant*; yet, none ever depended less for enjoyment on the mere pleasures of the table, and of no one could it be more truly said, that he "ate to live, and did not live

to eat." Many times, however, when I have met him at late and crowded parties, which he thoroughly disliked, and remembered that he would, notwithstanding, be at work next morning quite as early as usual (*if in winter, kindling his own fire to spare the servants*), I have regretted the inroads thus unnecessarily made on his constitution. On such occasions, reversing the German proverb, that *unkraut vergeht nicht* ("weeds do not perish"), I have, with an involuntary foreboding, said to myself, that Scott was too good to live long! To those who really knew his character, and are aware how inestimable his life and welfare were to all his connexions, this feeling will not appear strange; though others, perhaps, may deem it fantastic.

The usual meaning attached to the French adage, that "no man is a hero to his *valet de chambre*," was completely negatived and reversed in regard to the author of "Waverley;" for those who knew him most intimately, were by far the most perplexed and puzzled by the question, how he could fulfil so many conflicting duties, and acquit himself in all departments so much better than other people? His excellence in romance-writing might be explained. From early youth he had delighted in the study of history, in collecting old ballads and antiquarian curiosities, and in preserving memoranda of

remarkable characters. These memoranda were patiently accumulated, perhaps without any immediate object except that of the entertainment they might afford to one who delights in labour for its own sake ; but these early pursuits gave him an immeasurable advantage over other novelists. The romance-writing was an affair of art, as well as of innate and peculiar talent ; and he himself often maintained, that whoever would fix his attention firmly on a subject, and work without looking to the right or left, would accomplish as much. But one could not so easily explain his unparalleled command of temper, which it was scarcely possible to ruffle, far less to upset ; or the readiness with which he submitted to multiplied tasks, which must have been excessively irksome, without even owning that they were tasks ; or his unconquerable spirit and courage combined with the most playful gentleness ; or the methods by which he generally got over difficulties from which other minds would have shrunk in utter perplexity and dismay.

One peculiarity of character was a considerable degree of *absence*, as it is usually termed, resembling that of Lord President Blair, who had forgotten that his clerk's name was Thomson. During the long hours spent every day in the parliament-house, his mind was often as com-

pletely abstracted from the existing scene around him as if he had been in another world ; though I must admit, that this did not happen unless when he knew that his immediate attention to the judges could be dispensed with. A long speech of a stupid, dreaming, tiresome advocate, was in that respect very serviceable, as it allowed him an interval of perfect leisure. He would never, like the late Dr. Coventry, or Professor Hamilton of Aberdeen, walk out undressed, imagining that he had his clothes on, or answer *à tort et à travers* in conversation ; but he would sometimes wander out of his way, forgetting where he was, and completely absorbed in thought ; so that, if an unfenced coal-pit had been in the neighbourhood, the odds were fearfully against his personal safety. One moonlight night (it was in 1825), I found Sir Walter standing in a newly built street on the outskirts of the town, apparently in a deep reverie. " I was considering," said he, " what it is best to do. I have been at one party, and was engaged to another ; but look at these habiliments ! It happened, by a most ludicrous chance, and to my own very great surprise, that I found myself, a few minutes ago, lying at the bottom of a wet gravel-pit, from which I have just emerged ; and, I believe, it is indispensable

to steer homewards and *refit*, otherwise the whole discourse at old Lady ——'s *route* will consist of explanations why the unfortunate *lion* appears in such bad condition!" At this he laughed heartily; and such was the amenity of temper with which, until the fatal years 1831 and 1832, he used to bear, not merely the petty irritations, but the greater trials of life. Another peculiarity was, that in his own manuscripts, though having the clearest conception of what he intended to say, he would set down one word for another, sometimes the very opposite of what it ought to be; as, for example, June for January; and for names, especially Christian names, his memory, otherwise so tenacious, seemed to have actually no place; so that he would superscribe a letter with Ralph instead of Richard, even to a well-known correspondent.

On the effect of the novels, or their various merits, it would be superfluous to dwell. Each one, as they followed in rapid succession, seemed better than its precursor; and they were allowed to possess even more of intense life and natural energy than the poems. Every character was so clearly conceived, and so vividly brought out, as to form a portrait of which the reader could never tire. Even the more ordinary scenes or dialogues in these early novels, such

as did not, from their relation to the story, demand any great attention from the author, are yet touched with a hand so masterly, as to remind one of the best specimens of De Hoog as a painter; and, if the reader has by chance seen an original gem of that artist, he will readily grant the propriety of the allusion.

After all, the touchstone of a good novel consists in the question, whether, after the mystery has been solved, it will bear a second or third reading? No work, of which the interest depends on mystery alone, instead of resulting from vivid conception of character and situation, will bear this test. By its application, moreover, it will soon appear that such works are of very rare occurrence. The reader who has once admired "Guy Mannering," "Rob Roy," the "Antiquary," the "Bride of Lammermuir," the "Legend of Montrose," and "Old Mortality," may read them again with unabated interest numberless times. Coleridge said, that he always reverted to these books when low spirits or ill health required a mental cordial. In this respect, perhaps, the "Antiquary" is best; so perfect are all its pictures, so varied and intense the interest, that one might almost make it a constant companion, as Parson Adams did with *Æschylus*. Some of Fielding's and Smollet's

best novels will bear the same repetition of reading. So will "Don Quixote," and "Gulliver's Travels;" and, perhaps, the comic romances of the "Brown Man" in Germany: though their humour would hardly bear translation. But the number in the aggregate is very limited.

SECTION IV.

" THE SERE AND YELLOW LEAF."

CHAPTER I.

ATTACK OF SERIOUS ILLNESS—FORTITUDE UNDER ACUTE SUFFERINGS—PERSEVERANCE IN THE USE OF IRKSOME REMEDIES—CONTINUANCE OF LITERARY LABOUR—CONVALESCENCE AND PERFECT RECOVERY IN 1820.

It happened all of a sudden, in the year 1818, that Scott was attacked by a most severe and (as it eventually proved) tedious illness. He had one of his usual dinner-parties, at which he appeared in good spirits. Additional guests arrived in the evening; and, during a musical performance, he became so ill from cramp in the right side, that he withdrew to his bed-room. The circumstance was so completely unprecedented in his house, he was so unaccustomed to utter the least murmur on the score either of ill health or *worry*, that all who knew him were exceedingly alarmed. The disorder was a violent spasmodic attack, attended with frightful pain;

the first of a series of such paroxysms to which he was at intervals liable for more than a year. Feeling himself quite disabled, he yet did not forget his guests, but sent a message to Mrs. Henry Siddons, that nothing would do him so much good as to hear her sing, and nothing would annoy him more than to think that the festivity of the evening should be broken up in "most admired disorder," merely because he was attacked by a trifling indisposition, which would be better in the morning. Medical assistance was, of course, directly obtained, and the complaint was pronounced formidable, requiring the utmost quiet and caution in order to prevent inflammatory symptoms; but, according to his request, the music and supper-party proceeded as if no interruption had occurred.*

* On that evening a good and characteristic trait was elicited from the Ettrick Shepherd. Mr. James Ballantyne, who walked home with him from the party (to which, by the by, he went uninvited), happened to observe, "I do not at all like this illness of Scott's. I have often seen him look jaded of late, and am afraid it is serious." "Haud your tongue, or I'll gar you measure your length on the pavement!" replied Hogg. "You fause, down-hearted loon, that you are; ye daur to speak as if Scott were on his death-bed! It cannot be, it *must* not be! I will not suffer you to speak that gait." The sentiment was like that of Uncle Toby at the bed-side of Le Fevre; and, at these words, the shepherd's voice became suppressed with emotion.

For several days afterwards Scott continued to struggle with excruciating pain, and was reduced to great weakness, which, however, did not prevent him from resuming at intervals his ordinary employments. In about a week he was pronounced out of danger, and advised to go into the country, though his convalescence could not be secured without adherence to very strict regimen, and severe medical discipline.

The first attack, if I remember right, happened some time in winter, or early in spring. In the following summer, before the session closed, I recollect meeting Sir Walter in Charlotte Square, mounted on a low Highland pony, "riding," as he said, "for the *wholsomes*, which occupation he detested as much as any man could do." He then looked nearly as ill as during his last malady in 1831. He was worn almost to a skeleton; sat slanting on his horse, as if unable to hold himself upright; his dress was threadbare and disordered; and his countenance, instead of its usual healthy colour, was of an olive-brown—I might almost say, black tinge. Yet, from that meeting, though a friend who was with me thought that Scott would not live for another month, I derived the conviction of his recovery.

"The physicians tell me," said he, "that mere pain cannot *kill*; but I am very sure that no man would, for *other* three months, encounter

the same pain that I have suffered, *and live*. However, I have resolved to take thankfully whatever drugs they prescribe, and follow their advice as long as I can. Set a stout heart to a *stey brae*, is a grand rule in this world."

The day, though in summer, was cold and bleak; but the sun shone through a bank of clouds, and the invalid's eye lightened as he pronounced the last words. Three days afterwards I heard that his recovery was despaired of, but I did not despair. I wrote to him, earnestly recommending a certain mode of treatment, the same which ultimately was adopted by advice of the late Dr. Dick, at Abbotsford; namely, a slow alterative course of medicine, with very frequent use of the warm bath; which, at last, eradicated the disorder.

But the conflict was long and doubtful. That summer almost every one believed, on his departure from town, that he would never return. In truth, had it not been for his own unconquerable spirit, joined to the utmost patience and equanimity, no medical treatment, however skilful, could have been of any avail. Exercise, he knew, was of importance; therefore, of his own free will, he persevered in its use, though motion always exasperated the pain. At Abbotsford, in the autumn, he became so much worse, as to be not only unable to mount the

pony without assistance, but even to sit upright without the help of a servant on each side to support him. Still he persevered : and, after continuing this practice for several weeks, he felt, as he said, “ *very proud when he was once more able to ride a little way by himself ;*” and, from the day on which he first did so, his recovery might be considered certain. For a long time afterwards he was subjected to the same strict regimen, and had occasional attacks ; but the violence of the disorder gradually abated, till at length it disappeared altogether.

I have dwelt on this period of his life because it afforded such marked examples of his patience and indomitable spirit ; and, strange to tell, during the severe conflict with illness, he scarcely for one entire day relinquished his literary tasks. Among many kindly intended lectures on the necessity of *hard work*, he observed to me, in 1820, “ It is my conviction, that, by a little more hearty application, you might forget, and lose altogether, the irritable sensations of an invalid ; and I don’t, in this instance, preach what I have not endeavoured to practise. Be assured,” he continued, “ that if pain could have prevented my application to literary labour, not a page of “ *Ivanhoe*” would have been written ; for, from beginning to end of that production, which has been a good deal praised, I was never

free from suffering. It might have borne a motto somewhat analogous to the inscription which Frederick the Great's predecessor used to affix to his attempts at portrait-painting when he had the gout: 'Fredericus I. *in tormentis pinxit.*' Now, if I had given way to mere feelings, and ceased to work, it is a question whether the disorder might not have taken deeper root, and become incurable. The best way is, *if possible*, to triumph over disease by setting it at defiance, somewhat on the same principle as one avoids being stung by boldly grasping a nettle." In truth, his literary employments advanced more quickly during illness, as he had not so much interruption as usual from visitors. The third series of "Tales of my Landlord," which appeared in 1819, was followed so rapidly by the romance of "Ivanhoe," that it seemed as if, like the German La Fontaine, he had attained the art of dictating to two secretaries, and carrying on two stories at one time. To dictating of original composition he had always a particular aversion, but was now under the necessity of employing a scribe, his own scrolls being almost quite illegible. Both "Ivanhoe," and the "Bride of Lammermuir," were composed whilst he yet laboured under that painful disorder; and the duty of amanuensis was fulfilled alternately by Mr. William Laidlaw and

the late Mr. John Ballantyne. Frequently in the midst of the humorous scenes with old "Caleb Balderstone," the convulsive paroxysm would return, and his sufferings were most acute; but after the fit, he would cheerfully and quietly take up the story by the catch-word, and proceed as if there had been no interruption.

Thus the malady was resisted and overcome; and, in the course of 1820, he appeared so thoroughly renovated in constitution, that his friends fondly trusted he might equal in longevity his friends, Henry Mackenzie and Sir Robert Liston, and continue his literary pursuits for ever thirty years more. But, alas! as Drummond of Hawthornden predicted of his own illness,

"Truce ta'en to breathe
For late-born sorrows augurs swift return."

Only *twelve* more years of life were granted to him; and, as already said, I doubt whether, in the whole range of biography, an example could be found of another individual who, in an equal space of time, fulfilled so many, so diversified, and conflicting duties.

CHAPTER II.

RENEWED INTEREST IN GERMAN LITERATURE — JOHN KEMBLE—SCOTT RECEIVES HIS RANK OF BARONETCY—ATTACKS UNJUSTLY MADE ON HIS CHARACTER—THE KING'S VISIT TO SCOTLAND — ABBOTSFORD.

AT this period he took a lively interest in the specimens of modern German literature which were then published, and which, he said, "opened such a wide field for a labourer in the Teutonic mines, that he regretted not having a small drop out of St. Leon's bottle, in order to grow young again, and join in the work." This he spoke *en badinage*, in order to encourage one who then worked with some assiduity in the said mine, but whom illness, poverty, and persecution, has long since disabled. "The grand desideratum," he observed, "with regard to these German poets and philosophers, is to disencumber their meaning of its enormous envelope of useless words, and bring out some clear and sparkling ore from the dross, such as our dreaming, dawdling friend, has contrived to produce in several instances. Yet I fear he is himself somewhat inclined to mysticism, which will never do for

a writer of fiction ; no, nor of history, nor moral essays, nor sermons ! Every man either has, or thinks he has, troubles enough of his own to bother his brains ; and both rich and poor, when they take up a book, must have something absolutely clear and striking, which they understand directly, otherwise the volume is thrown aside, or sets them to sleep. We must take human nature as we find it, and make the most we can of such materials.”

Considering the tasks which, though self-imposed, always weighed on him imperatively, it was worthy of special remark, how happily Sir Walter could, now and then, adapt his talents to composition of occasional verses, and essays of temporary interest ; though, it must be owned, he had an extreme dislike of such occupation, and always declined it when suggested. One of the most notable instances in this respect occurred when the late lamented John Kemble retired from the stage at Edinburgh. A particular wish had been expressed that Sir Walter would write a farewell address. He directly called on Mrs. Kemble to say, that those very feelings which would induce him, had it been in his power, to contribute some lines, would prove the means of rendering the task impossible. Being quite sure that he could not write any thing on the subject which would

be tolerable in his own estimation, far less that of others, he must altogether decline the attempt. Notwithstanding all this, on the very next morning, by ten o'clock, Mrs. K. was agreeably surprised by receiving those well-known lines,—perhaps the most affecting, classical, and appropriate, which were ever produced for such an occasion. Yet, if I recollect right, they were accompanied by a note, apologising for having acquitted himself so poorly, and hoping that the will would be accepted for the deed. Among various theatrical characters in whom Scott took an interest, Kemble was the only one truly congenial; for, not only were his private habits and pursuits altogether those of a scholar and a gentleman, but, by sterling good sense, intrinsic worth, and kindness of heart, the most perfect *naïveté*, joined with decision and perseverance truly Roman, lastly, a vein of quiet humour irresistibly comic, he merited, as he enjoyed, the steady friendship of the “Great Unknown.”

In 1819 or 1820, I forget which, occurred the marriage of his eldest daughter with Mr. Lockhart, and the appointment of the present Sir Walter to a commission in the army. From this date, onwards to the year 1825, his life was spent in assiduous labour, but also in the most uninterrupted happiness and prosperity. In 1820, appeared the “Monastery” and “Abbot,”

and in January 1821, "Kenilworth;" so that, not forgetting "Ivanhoe," here were *four romances, of three volumes each*, completed within twelve months; and, had Constable's house been in reality solvent (of which, at this period, no one entertained even a shadow of a doubt), the *clear gain* must, without any exaggeration, have been a *very large* sum. As matters stood, the *use* of large sums was obtained at all events, and enabled him to realise his favourite plans at Abbotsford, both as to the purchase of land for plantation, and the final decorations of his house, where he now lived in a style of princely hospitality. Within this year, also, he visited London, and received the rank of baronetcy from that amiable sovereign who, with his usual discrimination of character, had already several times invited Scott to private dinner-parties, made him a present of a gold snuff-box, and invariably expressed towards him the most cordial friendship and sincere respect.

I believe it was Lavater, in his aphorisms, who said, that if a man has no enemies, this, alone, suffices to prove that he himself is good for nothing. It is a sweeping, but not a groundless remark; and, among the senseless attacks that *reptiles* occasionally made on the author of Waverley, it has been alleged, that he addicted himself too much to the society of the great,

and, in a word, was a tuft-hunter. Of all literary men that ever existed, Scott was *the very last* to whom such an imputation could be applicable. As it has been observed in *Fraser's Magazine* for August 1834, he was invariably *the sought*, and not the *seeker*. If such cavillers had reversed their mode of censure, and affirmed that he associated with, and conferred services on persons too much beneath him in rank, and unworthy of his patronage; this (though likewise very erroneous) would not have been so wide of the mark. The humblest and most disastrous circumstances would not deter him from encouraging talent, and giving due praise to innate worth; whilst, *as a patron*, instead of seeking distinction, he unalterably shrank from the responsibility of being looked on as such.

As to his political views, however much others may differ in opinion, assuredly they were derived, not from prejudice or vanity, but from fixed principles and firmly established conviction, which no motives of self-interest would have induced him to abandon.

The next five years gave rise to no less than seven romances or novels, amounting to twenty-three volumes, of which all—but especially the “Pirate,” the “Fortunes of Nigel,” and “Quentin Durward”—shewed unabated vigour, with the same unaffected charms of style

and forcible conception of character, that animated his earlier productions.

In 1822, Sir Walter took a leading part in the arrangements made to welcome the king on his visit to Scotland, when he evinced all that buoyancy of spirit and enthusiasm, which, more than twenty years earlier, had marked his conduct as quarter-master of the Mid-Lothian yeomanry corps. The occasions, no doubt, were very different; but the good tact, ardour, and perseverance, displayed by Scott, were the same, and proved that his mind still possessed all its youthful elasticity. The period of the king's visit formed a grand and effective jubilee; and, looking at the author of *Waverley* as he then appeared, no one could have formed the most distant surmise of the cruel reverses which were so soon to overtake him.

By this time, Abbotsford house and grounds were almost completed as they now exist, and formed a point of attraction to wandering pilgrims of all ranks, and from all countries, whose visits were occasionally much more numerous than welcome. By such imbecile cavillers as I have already mentioned, Scott has always been blamed for his love of aristocratic display, and his wish to "sink the author" in the preferable character of an independent country gentleman. The accusation is both inconsiderate and unjust; for

employment as a trade rather than an amusement. In the production of every line or stanza, he felt that the public eye was upon him, and expected something superexcellent; and so painful and injurious was the impression, that on this ground alone it is easy to account for the pleasure he afterwards took in writing his romances under an assumed name, and the veil of mystery.

“Rokeby” has ample proof of that power which, more or less, appeared in all his productions; but let it be compared with the three former poems, and I suspect it will be found decidedly inferior in that natural spirit and raciness which they exhibit. It was, in truth, *task-work*; and so he frequently confessed to me during its composition. “I *must* turn,” said he, “the three hundredth page; and, *heu me miserum*, have only arrived at two hundred and ten! I assure you, I am so sick-tired of this *grewsome* tale, that I can hardly persuade myself to drag it on any further.”

On a Sunday, which was always a busy time, I called on him to return an old and valuable manuscript, and apologised for my intrusion. “Never mind,” said he, “enter and welcome! When you last called, I was in a hobble, very tired, and almost thought I should never see the end of ‘Rokeby;’ but *now* I have got so

1. 1971
2. 1972
3. 1973
4. 1974
5. 1975

The table is extremely blurry and contains illegible text. It appears to have several columns and rows, but the content is completely unreadable due to the low resolution and blurring of the image.

display was not his object; vanity was never his ruling principle. He purchased and adorned Abbotsford precisely as he collected books and antiquities — not for show, but because they afforded him rational and permanent enjoyment. As a matter of taste, or source of pleasure, what pursuit on earth can be more harmless and elegant than that of landscape - gardening and architecture? Nor is it to be considered as an affair of taste only; for, whoever embarks his fortune in the formation of a country residence and grounds, finds himself in the station of a *petit souverain*, with the power of conferring incalculable benefit both on his own tenantry and the surrounding neighbourhood. It is a sphere of utility, as well as pleasure. This reminds me, *en passant*, that, instead of employing artists from London or Edinburgh, for the interior decorations of his house, he contrived, in such manner, to instruct ordinary workmen from the neighbouring villages, that they completed all his best furniture, and even executed rich carvings in wood, after Gothic models, in a style so masterly, that they often wondered at their own handicraft. Such were the effects of the same perseverance and ingenuity by which he excelled in literature, only applied to different purposes.

The detractors, already noticed, who censured

Scott for aristocratic notions and habits, did not choose to remember, that he was not merely a clansman, but member of an old border family of the highest consideration, and might be expected to inherit dispositions naturally consequent on such birth. In ancient times the knight returned from the wars, and was recompensed by his sovereign with a grant of land, and money to build a fair castle. Probably, Abbotsford was the first, and may be the last estate of any consequence, actually won and purchased by the pen of an imaginative author ; and it certainly was a very pardonable ambition, if Scott, having thus gained money by the pen instead of the sword, chose to live at his own house in a style such as became the descendant of an old border baron.

CHAPTER III.

SUDDEN PECUNIARY MISFORTUNES IN 1825 — MR. CONSTABLE'S FAILURE — CHANGED ASPECT OF THE HOUSE IN CASTLE STREET — DEMON OF PANIC — CALUMNIOUS ATTACKS — SIR WALTER'S PERFECT EQUANIMITY.

By recollected conversations and memoranda of particular days, this memoir might have been expanded to three times its present length; but circumstances now, as formerly, oblige me to close it within a certain space; and I must, therefore, devote my remaining pages to the last six years of his life. In 1825, every one who had any judgment or discrimination in commercial affairs, perceived clearly that there was a storm approaching. The system of raising money with extreme facility, even on the most absurd speculations, had been carried to such extent, that the over-blown bubbles must, at length, burst, and, in their explosion, create the utmost confusion and dismay. Sir Walter Scott, though ostensibly holding the rank of an independent country gentleman, was, by the number of his indorsations on the bills of Constable and Co., rendered liable for their commercial engagements to the

amount of at least 100,000*l.*, an appalling sum to be demanded of an individual whose entire effects, if brought to the hammer, would, probably, not realise even 10,000*l.*; for the whole estate of Abbotsford had already been assigned to the present Sir Walter on occasion of his marriage.

The recent facility in raising money had been exactly suited for the mode of conducting business adopted by Mr. Constable, who, though quite aware of existing difficulties, always indulged in day-dreams, that, by some grand speculation, he would retrieve all the past. Towards the end of the year 1825, however, it became nearly impossible for him to effect renewals of the bills already current. Among Scotch bankers, indeed, this might be done on the principle of intimidation, as they perceived that a refusal would cause immediate bankruptcy; but, in London, the only resource was among brokers and usurers. With, apparently, the most perfect calmness, Mr. Constable, who was then an invalid, remained principally at his country-house, organising the plan of his "Miscellany," by which original idea he plainly saw that large profits might be realised; for it was the very first of those cheap monthly or quarterly publications which, afterwards, caused an absolute revolution in the book trade, and by

which, in the aggregate, enormous sums have been gained. The work was to start with the "Life of Napoleon by the Author of Waverley;" and the projector took great delight in blazoning the prospectus of his future volumes, having engaged the most eminent authors in the kingdom to write on the topics he suggested. That bankruptcy might have been avoided, and the affairs of the house retrieved, I doubt not; but changes occurred in London so sudden and so fatal, that not one, even among the most cautious and considerate, could have foreseen so violent a catastrophe. The panic then spread like wild-fire: by next Christmas, some of the London failures cut off resources which he had looked upon as certain; and, in the beginning of 1826, he stopped payment, leaving enormous debts, to which the assets were comparatively nothing.

In the winter of 1825, I frequently met with Sir Walter Scott, and, at an interview in Castle Street, two months before Constable's bankruptcy was known, or even dreamed of, he predicted the changes which soon afterwards took place in the commercial world, and partly explained the methods which he had himself adopted in order to weather the storm. But, with the clearest remembrance of that conversation, I am thoroughly convinced that Sir Walter,

up to the time of Mr. Constable's examination as a bankrupt, remained in profound ignorance how the estate would turn out, and what would eventually be his own liabilities. He was prepared for a severe ordeal, and seemed perfectly tranquil; but, had he accurately known the extent of the difficulties, probably his arrangements to meet them would have been very different.

It may seem fantastic, — but, although at this time, Sir Walter Scott continued apparently in good health and spirits, I could not help entertaining somewhat of a mournful impression from the changed aspect of his house in Castle Street, — his original cell, as he termed it; and, truly, among the regular monks of old, there were few that worked so hard, even by way of penance, as he did, without speaking of his own labours, as if they had been more than salutary mental exercise “to procure night's rest and banish *ennui*!” This house had so long been the central *repertorium* of his literary and antiquarian treasure; it was *then* always so light and cheerful, one could not enter it without being saluted by the sounds of the harp, and remarking a general aspect, — a *je ne sais quoi* of prosperity; nor could one leave it, after an interview with its owner, without feeling himself “a happier and a wiser man!” This aspect, however, was now changed. Having removed

all his books to Abbotsford, he no longer sat in the apartment which formerly contained them, but in a small drawing-room above stairs; where the most conspicuous object was a cast from the skull of King Robert Bruce, as it had been discovered at Dunfermline Abbey—a relic on which he looked with great veneration, having placed it on a black marble pedestal with an inscription. Perhaps it was only this rather spectral object, which I had not seen before, together with the sombre atmosphere of a November day, that excited my gloomy reflections.

It may seem that, in this hasty sketch, I have said more than enough of his transactions with booksellers; for which, however, the reason is obvious: for thence, as an indirect, though unavoidable consequence, followed the sacrifice of his health and life. From the year 1826 to that of his death, the records of his existence are, in truth, only the records of a martyrdom; though, till 1831, the trials were endured with such fortitude and spirit, that, to ordinary observers, he might seem prosperous as ever. In the month of January 1826, it became apparent, that on *his* exertions alone must depend the liquidation of all the bills accepted by Constable and Co., and bearing his indorsation; so that at the age of nearly threescore, he had to do the work of

his previous life over again. Nor, at this period, was the disposition to shew lenity and forbearance by any means *unanimous* among his creditors. The demon of "panic" (for terror is sometimes a fierce passion!) and the demon of avarice were abroad, and hardened almost every heart. Even the grossest calumny and misrepresentation could not be avoided, though it is almost superfluous to observe, that his paltry assailants, in *that* department, only exposed their own malignity without effecting their *amiable* purpose. By such enemies it was asserted, that Sir Walter must have been aware of the approaching insolvency at the time when he assigned Abbotsford to his eldest son; consequently, *that* transaction was a fraud on his (or rather Constable's) creditors.

I remember this being inadvertently said one day in the presence of a literary friend, who despised the aggressor too much to lose temper, and very calmly replied, "Suppose your *first* position granted, though, to say the least, it is a most erroneous assumption; yet, before the *fraud* is established, you must prove that Sir Walter will not, and cannot find means to pay the debts, and *this* I defy you or any man to do." It is almost needless, in this place, to remind the reader that, before Sir Walter's death, the enormous load of claims (which, had payment

depended on the bookseller's estate, must have been quite desperate) was reduced to about one-third; so that the books, pictures, plate, and curiosities, which had been placed under trust, were offered back to him by the creditors; and that, his frame being untimely worn out in the struggle to effect this object, he died, without leaving any fortune to the junior members of his family.

Having stated that Sir Walter Scott did not, in the hour of adversity, escape malignant attacks, I must not omit to add, that these proceeded only from a few despicable individuals; while the creditors, who had most at stake, and whose voices had most influence, even objected to the sacrifices he was inclined to make, and would, from the first, have been contented with a moderate composition. But, calmly and resolutely he contemplated the liquidation of the debts to the utmost fraction. His own words, daily and hourly repeated, were, that, "as long as God granted him life and health, he should never feel averse to labour. For many years he had been accustomed to hard work, because he found it a pleasure; now, with all due respect for Falstaff's principle, 'nothing on compulsion,' he certainly would not shrink from work because it had become necessary." With regard to Constable's failure,

he was never heard to utter the slightest murmur ; on the contrary, when others blamed the enterprising publisher for deception and chicanery, he remarked, that such conclusions were somewhat rash, as it was impossible to know how far the unfortunate bankrupt had himself been deceived. So determined was Sir Walter Scott to overcome the difficulties by his own resources and exertions, that, although at this period a very large sum was placed at his disposal, by a friend who chose to remain anonymous, he returned it to the bankers from whose hands it came, with a letter gratefully acknowledging, but steadily declining the favour.

The winter of 1825-6, both in London and Edinburgh, was a painful and dreary one to all but *the rich*, who, instead of being annoyed by the changes, derived only the additional amusement of bolting and barring their gates, and raising their voices, against almost hourly applications for aid, which lent a piquancy and zest to their own welfare and comforts, otherwise unattainable. Among such opulent and careless individuals, not one, during the crisis, appeared more calm and collected than Sir Walter Scott, though the fortune, which he had toiled to win, was utterly gone. To his honour be it recorded, that the political letters published at this date, under the signature of Malgrowther,

had very great influence in protecting Scotland from that fatal change in the monetary system, with respect to one-pound notes, which, in England, up to the present hour, is so justly regretted. During the winter session of 1826, he formed all those arrangements to which he afterwards steadfastly adhered; gave up his house and furniture in Edinburgh to the auctioneer; insured his life in favour of creditors, for a large sum (25,000*l.*, I believe), and signed a trust deed over his own effects at Abbotsford, including an obligation to pay, in cash, a certain sum yearly, until the debts were liquidated.

CHAPTER IV.

DEATH OF LADY SCOTT—SALE OF PROPERTY—SIR WALTER'S
HABITS ON RETURNING TO EDINBURGH IN MAY 1826 —
REDOUBLED INDUSTRY — LIFE OF NAPOLEON — VISIT TO
PARIS.

HAVING entered into these contracts, he left town, as usual, for Abbotsford. But the evil days had now arrived: and, as misfortunes do not come single, Lady Scott's health, which, from nervous irritability, had long been uncertain, became hopeless; and, in the beginning of May, she died. With the inflexible perseverance of a soldier on duty, Scott returned in a short time to the routine of his employments at Edinburgh; one difference in his habits being, that he now worked almost without intermission. During his absence, the property in Castle Street had been brought to the hammer — a step which, I think, never should have been adopted. It took place, indeed, by his own consent; but his trustees and creditors should scarcely have permitted, in this case, the realisation of the scene described at the close of Guy Mannering, nor permitted an auctioneer

and a rabble to trespass on that "cell," wherein the author of "Waverley" had so long resided, and to which he felt no slight local attachment. The only indication of regret I ever heard him betray on the subject, was the expression of dislike to pay a visit in the immediate neighbourhood, because he would have to walk past the threshold of what had been his own house.

On his return to town, in the month of June, being alone, he established himself at a third-rate lodging in St. David's Street, such as might be considered suitable for a humble student attending the university. Here, at the very first meeting, when I found him busily engaged in writing after dinner, I could not help predicting that, by such application (though he did not seem to feel it), health must eventually be undermined. It is true, that literary labour had been to him a pleasure, and he could persevere in it to any extent: but *now*, if weariness or pain did result, he was no longer at liberty to attend to such warnings; a very long task was before him, and whatever might be the consequence, he *must* proceed. Moreover, business of all kinds increased on his hands; and the letters, which he had every day to acknowledge, were alone a sufficient burden: but he went through them without hesitation, making obvious efforts in his replies to use *as few words as possible*, and, from haste,

often falling into verbal inaccuracies. Great as were his exertions afterwards, I have always thought that to the domestic affliction, the painful impressions, and incessant labours of the year 1826, was imputable the break of his constitution, though the injury was not *then* apparent. In St. David's Street he kept earlier hours than ever; and sometimes in one morning, before the meeting of court, at ten o'clock, he had finished an entire sheet of twenty-four pages for the printer. His hand-writing was now so small and cramped, that one of his ordinary quarto pages made, at least, double that amount in print; and, "after all," he observed, "it was really no great exploit to finish twelve pages in a morning." But on his return from the Parliament House, however wearied he might be, the task was again resumed. Seldom receiving any company, he scarcely sat for a quarter of an hour at dinner, but turned directly to his writing-desk, being anxious, he said, to take all possible advantage of the long days, and "make hay while the sun shone." The most remarkable of all his peculiarities on such occasions, was that, however heavy the task might be, and however much he became pressed for time, there never appeared the slightest flurry or irritation in his demeanour; he never seemed vexed or in a hurry, but, with a sort of smile

on his countenance, took up the pen and went on, to all outward appearance, as willingly as if the whole had been for his own amusement merely.

Finding, by reiterated experience, that whatever he wrote, whether in prose or verse, narrative or criticism, now brought large remuneration, Scott had materially departed from his former principles respecting authorship as a trade or profession. He seemed to entertain the notion, that whoever was not absolutely devoid of learning and talent might, by *sufficient drudgery*, realise a good income from literary pursuits; and even recommended this resource to some of his friends, who had also suffered during the "panic," as a means of repairing their broken fortunes. How fallacious was this belief, I need not here pause to explain. The "*nec studium sine divite vend*" of Horace, is again applicable. There must be the *vivida vis*, the *perfervidum genium*, as well as good sense, and the disposition to "drudgery." But let all these be combined together and exerted to the utmost, yet, if the author is poor, and depends merely on his own abilities, the result will still be as doubtful as the fate of any ticket in a state lottery. I know not any record which illustrates this truth more forcibly than the late Mr. Dallas's memoir of Lord Byron. The struggles and even artifices

to which the author of "Childe Harold," *though neither poor nor friendless*, was at first obliged to have recourse, in order to obtain even a hearing, or enjoy the brittle *chance* of success, were indeed humiliating and wretched. Equal evidence of this fact is afforded by his own letters in Moore's life of the poet. In 1826, "Woodstock" was the novel that Scott had immediately on the anvil; and, *as* might have been expected under such unfavourable circumstances, did not rank among his best productions. Its appearance was delayed by an absurd demand made by Constable's assignees, for the completion of the work in their favour, on the ground that bills had been granted for this romance. Sir Walter very coolly said, that the promises *to pay* having unfortunately proved nugatory, the promises *to write* could not be held binding; at all events, the remainder of the book (of which only a small part had been printed) was "in his head, and *there* it should remain till he saw good reason for sending it forth." The matter was submitted to arbitration, and he was allowed to finish the novel for the benefit of his own creditors.

The work that now principally occupied his attention was the "Life of Napoleon," respecting which he had entered into a contract with the booksellers, and which, at first, he

expected to be able to finish in about six months. Without a moment's reflection on the state of his health, he continued to urge forward this task; and the progress he made in it during next vacation at Abbotsford, was so rapid, that he became more than ever impressed with the idea, that mere industry, and the habit of keeping the pen always in hand, might overcome almost any worldly difficulties. I believe one main-spring of his success, as an author, consisted in the hearty resolution and fervour with which he embarked in every employment, and which produced such complete abstraction, that the labour progressed insensibly. Lavater, and others, have pretended to judge of character by mere autographs; and the state of nerves and feelings may certainly be guessed at. In all Scott's manuscripts, till the fatal year 1831, there are unequivocal indications of uncommon firmness, calmness, and *rapidity*.

The summer of 1826 passed over in a state of seclusion and outward tranquillity, such as he had not known for years; and he received no visitors, except the most intimate friends. But, in the month of October, he very judiciously resolved to make a short tour to Paris; without which diversity and relaxation, it is probable that, in the ensuing winter, his health would

have completely broken down. This afforded him an opportunity of obtaining some *data* respecting the more important parts of Napoleon's life, which could not otherwise have been supplied ; but the main advantages were change of scene and exercise. As a traveller, whether by sea or land, he was the best of companions ; and seemed only amused by circumstances which, to a regular John Bull, habituated to the *comforts* of his own square parlour and elbow-chair, his red moreen window-curtains, Turkey carpet, roast beef, and port wine, are serious evils. Accordingly, he derived much exhilaration from this journey, though teased at Paris by honours and compliments which he would much rather have escaped.

On his return to Edinburgh, he took a furnished house in Coates' Crescent, where, in December, I found him in good spirits, though suffering great pain from rheumatism ; a warning, perhaps, that the mode of life he adopted was one which could not be persevered in without serious injury. Notwithstanding this, he never, for a day, relaxed from his labours ; and, though fatigued at night, complained of inability to sleep. " Yet," as he observed, " how can any one expect to sleep, who uses no bodily exercise ? And betwixt the parliament-house and this endless ' Life of Napoleon,' exercise with

me is out of the question." Within the following vacation-time, however, the whole nine volumes of the *Life* were completed ; thus winding up a task, by far the most irksome he had yet encountered, principally from the conviction, that the haste in which he was obliged to write must inevitably prevent him from doing adequate justice to such an enormous mass of materials. But the success, in a pecuniary point of view, was quite commensurate with his expectations. The booksellers paid a large sum (not less than 14,000*l.* I believe) for the copyright ; and the circulation of the book being immense, both at home and abroad, they had no reason to repent of their bargain.

CHAPTER V.

RENEWED HOSPITALITY—BENEVOLENCE—WAVERLEY—MASK
AND MANTLE THROWN ASIDE—CONDUCT OF CREDITORS—
VISIT TO LONDON IN 1828.

THUS, more than 1100*l.* per month had been realised *during the first year* after those complicated misfortunes by which the courage of any ordinary man would have been completely overthrown. Hence he was able to commence liquidation of the debts in such manner as entirely to silence those paltry defamers of his character, who had the insolence to assert that Abbotsford was assigned in order to defeat the just claims of creditors. Once more his health was apparently quite firm; and constant occupation, instead of exhausting, seemed to give buoyancy to his spirits. His former habits of life in regard to hospitality were, in a great measure, resumed; and he sometimes reverted to his old axiom, that three hours *per diem*, if sedulously employed, were enough to secure a good literary income. But new and incongruous labours crowded upon him, and he flinched from no task: on the contrary, he even wrote occasional

contributions to periodical works, by which he did not profit; in order, by this means, to lessen the distresses of those whom, out of his own regular income, he could no longer assist. "It is but the sacrifice of a little sleep and exercise," he said, on one of those occasions; "and if only this article, as it is called, will do the poor man any real good, I shall think myself well rewarded. But there are people in the world, who have such an unfortunate alacrity in sinking, that it is impossible, by any efforts, to buoy them up."

I had almost forgotten that, in the beginning of the year 1827, the mask and mantle of the author of "Waverley" were thrown aside; but the circumstances of the Theatrical Fund dinner, Lord Meadowbank's speech, and Sir Walter's reply, have been so often repeated, that it is needless to dwell on the subject here. The disclosure had a fortunate effect on his reputation; for, till then, the rumour had been very general that the late Mr. Thomas Scott, or some other friend, had a *share* in the composition of those unequalled fictions; whereas, it now appeared that they were wholly and exclusively his own. The new monthly edition of the Waverley novels, with annotations by the author, was a most fortunate idea, which naturally arose out of this *eclaircissement*; and, as half the profits were allowed to Sir Walter, it formed a

new sinking-fund for creditors. But, as he conscientiously fulfilled his duty of editorship (if it may be so called), and corrected every sheet, it became a much more serious undertaking, in point of time and labour, than he at first calculated. The next *heavy* task which he encountered, was a history of Scotland (not published till 1830) for Dr. Lardner's Cyclopædia. I forget how much was the *honorarium* for that work, but it must have been a considerable sum. The years 1827, 1828, 1829, and 1830, each produced its original romance; and within the same space of time he wrote the nine volumes of "Tales of a Grandfather," and one volume of dramatic poetry, besides being a frequent contributor to the "Quarterly Review," the "Foreign Quarterly," and many other works. His Letters on Demonology, which appeared in 1830, have been already noticed.

Still, with all his exertions, successful as they were; although, even for some old scraps, 500*l.* were offered and paid by the proprietor of a successful annual; and although even a specimen of his handwriting was transmutable into gold among people who, perhaps, would not have given a penny for any other autograph,—there was yet always on his mind the *corroding* impression, that the debts, though materially diminished, were not liquidated. It is, indeed,

a prevalent characteristic of creditors, that, although they would declare themselves satisfied at once with a small portion of their demands if promptly paid — and they were firmly told that they could obtain no more — yet, when a gradual process of reduction is commenced, for the sake of liquidating in full, their principles entirely change, and they look with feverish anxiety to the receipt of the last fraction. Even had it been possible to forget this actual state of affairs, yet, now and then, instances of rapacity and spite occurred, which painfully forced on him the reflection that he “did not read his own books, nor eat with his own spoons.” One of Constable’s creditors, a London Jew (holding a bill endorsed by Sir Walter Scott), had, in the autumn of 1828, nearly upset all the arrangements previously agreed on, by persisting in his refusal to accept, even *pro tempore*, any part of his claims. Others might do as they liked, but he would either have the *whole*, or take all the advantages that the law, on a bill of exchange, allowed him. However, the claim of this worthy was set aside on a proof of usury, and he was glad to accept any terms. In addition to all such annoyances (as no one on earth entertained greater affection for his own family, including his grandchildren, than Sir Walter Scott), he was tormented by the ap-

prehension that, in all probability, his life would close before he had been able to provide means of leaving them any adequate fortune. On all occasions of trial and suffering, the degree of immediate pain depends much on *previous* habits and circumstances. By fortitude and patience, it is true, the utmost pressure may be sustained with apparent calmness and indifference; yet, alas! *that* fortitude and patience will not prevent the natural consequence of pressure in exhausting strength and engendering disease.

During the spring of 1828, Scott resided some time in London, at the house of his son-in-law, where he appeared, for an interval, to forget all his cares; nor did he decline accepting the invitations which every day crowded on him from individuals of the highest rank. Notwithstanding this gaiety, he never failed to execute his usual task of writing in the early hours of the morning; and, as Mr. Lockhart observed, "while to spectators it appeared that his whole time was occupied with visitors and banquets, he actually covered more paper with manuscript than many an author who staid in town for no other purpose but that of literary labour." Nor did the constant and, indeed, harassing attentions shewn to him by the great, prevent his finding leisure to visit such acquaintances as were now in obscurity, poverty, and affliction;

for of such the *wide world of London*, of course, afforded a share : and at one house, I remember, where sickness and sorrow then prevailed, his carriage might be seen almost daily. Enough has been said already of the foolish attacks made on Sir Walter for his aristocratic spirit, but I may be excused for repeating that, in his own conceptions of the character of a gentleman, he never forgot the leading principles of the cavalier, whose primary duty is to raise the fallen, and assist the distressed. As already observed, however, his attentions in this respect were by no means indiscriminate ; and he would exact a good deal of exertion and fortitude from a *protégé*, being himself (in his own phrase) a “ hard-working man.”

CHAPTER VI.

AUTHOR'S LAST VISIT TO ABBOTSFORD — LIBRARY AND MUSEUM — DOMESTIC HABITS AND REGULATIONS — THE ARMOURY — RECOLLECTIONS OF SIR WALTER'S CONVIVIAL SPIRIT — MR. CHARLES K. SHARPE — REMARKS ON BOOK-MAKING — SIR EGERTON BRYDGES — BARON DE LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ.

It was in the autumn of 1829 that I paid my last visit to Abbotsford, of which place I have given no particular description in this memoir, for the obvious reason, that so many accóunts have been already published; whereas, of the owner's character and habits I have not seen any sketch that appeared to me satisfactory. With regard to Abbotsford, indeed, a descriptive catalogue of the curiosities, with the legends or traditions attached to each, is yet a desideratum; for which, however, it is doubtful if any survivor could supply the requisite information. At present, I should rather wish (but the wish is vain) that it were possible to convey to my reader the impressions caused by a visit to that abode during the lifetime, and in the presence, of its owner. Beyond the gates you had an

extensive park, laid out on the best and boldest principles of landscape-gardening, as applicable to forest scenery ; while, within doors, you were surrounded, in every apartment, with objects calculated, not only to realise the cherished visions of romance, but to awaken all those associations which, to the historian, the biographer, and antiquary, are the most valuable and interesting. In these brief words may be summed up the description of Abbotsford ; but, go thither *now* ; and, though the objects within and without are the same, yet the impressions to which I alluded, and vainly wished to convey, are gone for ever : the spell is broken : and the scene, however beautiful, breathes only melancholy and desolation !

No ; it was not the beauty of the grounds, nor the elaborately finished apartments, which, in the owner's lifetime, principally impressed the mind of a visitor at Abbotsford ; but the unavoidable consciousness of being within reach, and under the direct influence, of that mighty magician, who had originated these and many other imperishable memorials of his genius. If any fantastic ornaments of the architecture, any rusty dagger, or, perhaps, nondescript article in the museum, or picture on the walls, excited curiosity, you knew that Sir Walter could give, not only the authentic history of the single ob-

ject in question, but, in all probability, this would be followed by a string of interesting legends, which, if they could be found elsewhere, it would cost years to collect. When he happened to be in good spirits, and at leisure, a solitary old *spleuchan*, or matchlock, would serve as the text for an almost complete history of the Highland clans; and, if you had in view any literary pursuit requiring investigation, and were consulting a book in the library, he would immediately weave together a mass of evidence, remind you of every author whose works deserved attention, and throw more light on the subject in ten minutes, than, if left alone among books, you could have obtained for yourself in as many months.

I have used above the words *unavoidable* consciousness, because, whether the said magician were actually present, or shut up in his own *sanctum*, or wandering in his favourite woods,—you were reminded every moment, in one shape or another, of his benign sway through the whole establishment, and all the “goings on” of the household. I cannot explain myself better on this point, than by observing, that, at Abbotsford, there was an utter absence of all those petty annoyances which, less or more, exist in the best regulated families; while to visitors, whose pursuits and dispositions were, in any

degree, analogous with those of their kind host, every wish was not only met, but anticipated.

According to Rousseau's axiom, our "best virtues depend on trifling precautions;" and I am half inclined to illustrate my present position by the mention of some outward trifles in the *menage*, which the reader may, perhaps, think absurd and ludicrous; for example, gas-light, writing materials, and the conduct of servants! But I do this on the principle, *ex uno disce omnes*. Never, perhaps, was any one more lenient to domestics than Sir Walter, and yet no one was ever better served. His own conduct insured such profound respect and attention, that, moving with noiseless, though rapid tread, they seemed intuitively conscious of whatever he or his guests required. Even good old John (who by this time was superannuated), although, by nature, inclined to hard-drinking, was scarcely ever known to indulge in his favourite propensity, unless when entirely *off duty*, and his aberrations could not possibly interfere with his master's comfort or interest.

Now, for the *second* illustration of domestic arrangements on Rousseau's principles, though for this I shall probably be laughed at. Elsewhere, when on a visit, you may wish to write a letter, or commence an epic poem; but should you have forgotten to bring your own

writing implements, are referred to my lord's library table, where he is, perhaps, himself occupied; or to my lady's writing-desk in the drawing-room; with the exception of which, perhaps, a whole establishment, though supported by twenty or thirty thousand pounds per annum, could not afford any better means and appliances than the loan of a blacking-bottle from the servants' hall (the steward's ink-pot being nailed to his desk). This may seem caricature, but I have known the whole realised. At Abbotsford, on the contrary, not only each table in the recesses of the library, but in every sleeping apartment, had its *port-feuille*, with store of paper, pens, ink, and sealing-wax. Match-box and taper to those who knew the ways of the house were unnecessary, for it was a practice to keep the oil-gas burning, though at so very low a degree, that unless the stop-cock were touched, the consumption was insignificant, and the flame imperceptible. In the large antique dining-room there hung a very beautiful lustre, which in spring and autumn was always lighted, though invisibly, before dinner; and on the approach of darkness, instead of the usual interruption and parade of servants bringing candles, the full blaze of light could be produced, as if magically, by a single touch, or moderated to any degree.

With regard to the mansion itself, the room that always seemed to me the most imposing and effective, is the front hall, or armoury—so faithful are its imitations, or, I should say, renovations of genuine old models, so massive and sombre is the style, and so rich the collection of objects interesting to an antiquary. A whole morning might be well employed in examining this one apartment, with a *cicerone* that knew all its history. It is about forty feet long, has a tessellated pavement of black and white Scotch marble, and a noble roof in rich Gothic arches. *Here*, as in the rest of the mansion, though the general plan was, of course, original, Sir Walter Scott adopted the system of forming *details*; that is to say, roofs, fire-places, windows, and doors, by precise copies from the veritable antique: and wherever it was possible to employ actual portions of old buildings, either in wood or stone, they were, of course, used in preference. In the hall, if I mistake not, the richly carved panels of black and imperishable oak were brought from the ruins of Dunfermline palace or abbey; and the immense fire-place was exactly modelled after that of an existing old castle. I cannot imagine a scene more poetically impressive than this room, especially when viewed by summer moonlight. But the grounds were far more interesting to Sir Wal-

ter than his castle; for, as already often mentioned, no amateur of landscape-gardening ever followed that pursuit with more enthusiasm, and, supposing that he had been born poor, or been at a loss for a profession, that of land-designing might certainly have afforded an income, and, perhaps, led him on, as it has led others, to affluence.

Soon after my arrival, I met Sir Walter returning from his usual ramble through the woods, attended by his dogs, and with a weeding hook in his hand, for the favourite amusement of pruning trees was not recommended till October, when the leaves fall. At this time not the slightest apprehension was entertained, by his friends, of an unfavourable change in his constitution, nor were there any decided marks of "tear and wear." But, though his reception was, as usual, kind and cordial, yet it scarcely appeared to me as if he were in his wonted spirits, nor so cheerful as, during his residence at London, in the spring of the previous year. His health was good; but there were occasional clouds of anxiety on his brow, and almost a shade of irritability occurred late in the evening, when he was reminded of his promise to answer some London letters, — "I wish," said he to Mr. Lockhart, "you would put me in mind, also, *what those people wanted* ;

for, truly, I have forgotten. I cannot now read the letters over again."

At dinner, however, he was in the utmost good-humour, and disposed, *as of yore*, to talk only on subjects fitted to promote mirth. There was no difference, excepting that his voice was pitched in a lower key, and his laugh was neither so hearty nor so long. Whilst writing these words, I reflect involuntarily on numberless merry-meetings, of which I have not attempted any record in this brief sketch, but where his unaffected high spirits, unconquerable good-humour, gentleness of manner, and intense perception of the ludicrous, gave a tone and vivacity otherwise unknown to the whole party, and often protracted conviviality to a late hour. One trifling example occurs to me, which happened not long before the period of his changed fortune. I was placed next to Sir Walter at an ill-assorted dinner assemblage in the house of a mutual friend: however, the wine and *provant* (to borrow Dalgetty's phrase) were good; and on such occasions, so long as he retained health, Scott *would* be joyous and happy, in spite of all blunders, and however uncongenial might be the society into which he was thrown. Some foreigners were present, who, almost immediately after dinner, were called on to sing; and, having once begun their performances, could not be

prevailed on to stop again, which proved an enormous bore. All of a sudden Scott turned to me; and, in his rough border accent, said, "These gentlemen have kindly favoured us with so much of their country's music, that really it is full time we should compensate the obligation, and let them hear some of ours." With an irresistibly comic expression, he gave me the corner of a table-napkin to hold, and struck up,—

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?" &c.

It was like setting the spark to a train of gun-powder. All *serviettes* were instantly raised *en cordon*, all voices raised, all hearts roused; and so powerful and harmonious was the chorus, that, for the rest of the evening, we were not troubled with any more foreign cantatas.

But, to return. A long interval had elapsed since I had been at Abbotsford, and he seemed amused with my great admiration of the magical changes that had taken place there, especially in regard to the museum of antiquities, and the pictures; though, in the last department, his expenditure was always very limited.

"After all," said he, "I am not sure that I value any part of my graphic collection more than this very old acquaintance of yours, which

you praised five-and-twenty years ago." He pointed to a pen-and-ink sketch, by Mr. Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, of Queen Elizabeth dancing. "It is an unrivalled production," he added; "for, though I have laughed at the old lady a thousand times, I can scarcely see her without laughing *now*. What excellent books, illustrated by his own pencil or *burin*, our friend Sharpe might have given to the world, had it not been for mere laziness, — that besetting sin of independent gentlemen, which opens the door for blue devils, and brings down the greatest talents and acquirements to a level with mere emptiness and folly: only with this difference — they are, no doubt, a source of enjoyment to the possessor, and in that respect Sharpe is fortunate.

Mr. * * * observed, that if all those independent gentlemen who have cultivated minds were to become authors, we should have too many books; and if they wrote for fame, instead of profit, booksellers would have their shelves so amply stocked for nothing, that, henceforward, the *trade* of authorship would be at an end.

"I rather think," replied Sir Walter, "it would turn out like playing on the piano-forte or violin. Every one does so who can; but the number of performers worth hearing is very limited, and *they* alone can make much money, or command much applause. Reflect on the

number of your independent acquaintances, and tell me how many of them are in reality qualified, either from acquired knowledge, or what is called genius, to write a *good* book; and, I think, you will agree that there is no chance of our being overstocked in that department. After all, there not only has been, but always must be, a demand for books in the world; which, to some people, are at least as indispensable as hot rolls for breakfast; though I remember poor Signor Corri telling me, with the gravest possible aspect, that, were *he* to commence business as a baker, all the world would immediately give up eating bread."

After dinner he laughed heartily at the interest excited by his *quaichs*, a basketful of which, was usually sent round with whisky and other *liqueurs*, from which collection every guest who liked a dram, selected a cup according to his fancy. For the information of my southron, or foreign readers, I must observe, that *quaichs* are a species of small drinking-cup, with two handles, sometimes cut out of a solid piece of wood, marble, agate, or ivory; and sometimes constructed in mosaic, of which the most estimable specimens are those containing the greatest number of component parts. The value of those used at Abbotsford consisted in their antiquity, and the traditions attached to each;

according to which, one was named Prince Charles, another Rob Roy, and so forth.

The conversation that day turned partly on politics, a subject which, with me, never makes any lasting impression; on the strange malady of John Clerk, Lord Eldin, who, in his old age, had become ungovernably insane; on the character of Sir Egerton Brydges, for whom Scott had a great regard; on the Baron de la Motte Fouqué, in whose writings he descried merit which, I imagine, was more the production of his own imagination, than of the baron's genius. But, in truth, Sir Walter had now no time to study the works of others; and was so habituated to original composition, that reading no longer afforded him sufficient excitement.

Like Napoleon, he never sat long at table, but removed, about eight o'clock, to the large and beautiful library, where ample resources of amusement for company were afforded by the musical performances of Mrs. Lockhart and Miss Scott, and the boundless collection of prints and illustrated works of every description. About ten o'clock, refreshments in the form of supper were brought in, when, usually, he asked for a "tankard of porter;" and, at eleven, he retired for the night.

CHAPTER VII.

CONVERSATION AT EDINBURGH IN DECEMBER, 1829—SYMPTOMS OF APPROACHING ILLNESS, WHICH, IN THE AUTUMN OF 1831, FEARFULLY INCREASED—LOW SPIRITS AND DECLINE—SIR WALTER'S LAST PUBLIC APPEARANCE IN SCOTLAND, AT A POLITICAL MEETING, IN 1831—DOCTOR ABERCROMBY.

IN this hasty memoir, I have aimed principally at giving a faithful account of Scott's character, and daily habits of life; in regard to which I shall, probably, not incur blame for having noticed even the merest trifles. I have, also, explained, perhaps at more than sufficient length, the nature of those involvements that proved, ultimately, the direct cause of his illness and death, which, though unsuspected, were now fast approaching. Next winter, in the month of December, I waited on him at his house in Shandwick Place, Edinburgh, to take leave before setting out on a long journey, and was more than ever impressed with the idea, that his habits of unremitting application must prove destructive. I did not venture any remarks on that point, however, but inveighed against the

Court of Session, and asked, whether a principal clerk, like a judge, was not entitled to his full salary, without performance of duty, after a certain number of years' service?

"I am sure," said he, "your suggestion is kindly meant, and yet I am half inclined to scold a little, because it seems as if you adopted the principle that people may recoil from duty whenever it becomes not quite convenient or agreeable. Now, setting aside the question of honour, the truth is, that, *to have* what we like in this world, we must often *do* what we dislike; a maxim which I recommend to your serious consideration. However, as to my own case, I have become so perfectly habituated to attendance in court, that, as long as health continues, I am not entitled to tax my country for pay without working. Again, as to the trade of scribbling, which has devolved on me to a *rather* unusual extent, are there not times when I must ask myself the question, 'Were it not for this, what else should I do?' What resource should I have when off duty in the winter days, unless, like our friend Robert Hamilton, to play whist without intermission? Rely on it, the pains or pleasures of this life depend mainly on the *animus*, the volition with which our acts are accompanied; and, were a man *doomed* to play at whist for seven hours a day, you would soon

hear him grumbling as if he were condemned to the treadmill. Our duties would seldom be very disagreeable, if we did not perversely resolve to think them so. Reflect on this doctrine, for it may be of use where you are going."

He seemed to derive some amusement from a rather grotesque account I gave him of a literary aspirant, who had recently been unfortunate, but whose overweening arrogance rendered him, perhaps, more an object of ridicule than commiseration. "I have no doubt," said he, "our friend * * * * will, to the last, persist in averring and believing that he is the worst used man in the world, and will never, for an instant, admit that his own conduct has been otherwise than immaculate. Vanity first engendered the 'clouds that lower upon his house.' How fortunate for him would it have been, had he taken my advice ten years ago, when, by following the steps of his worthy ancestors, and improving a small competence, he might have paved the way for arriving, in time, at the dignity of provost in his native town; whereas *now*, the result will be at best only the honour, such as it is, of supplying materials for another chapter in D'Israeli's calamities of authors. The fortuitous success of *one* article proved his ruin. Self-conceit was henceforth mistaken for inspiration, and excitement for energy. So, he must

needs try his fortune in London, imagining, perhaps, that he would there become a centre of admiring circles; instead of which, he is driven aside, and, in astronomical phrase, left amid the obscure and nondescript *nebulae*."

At this meeting, there was perceptible an entirely new shade in Sir Walter's character, from which I augured no good. Formerly, he would attach less importance to fifty pounds, than a more rigid arithmetician to five; but now he appeared anxious and fretful about pecuniary affairs, even in regard to small sums. The next year was one of heavy tasks, not merely those which were published, but those which he *partly* wrote, and which his literary executor will, of course, commemorate. But, in his once favourite season of autumn, 1830, he began to experience bodily disorders, which were not, as before, attended by severe pain, but were symptomatic of organic derangement and decay. The pressure for the last six years had been too violent, and the motion too incessant for the springs of life. I have called his fate a martyrdom; for, although mental anxiety or emotion may be a *slow*, yet there can hardly be a *surer* way of causing death. Incessantly, though imperceptibly, it wastes, weakens, and corrodes the nervous system till paralysis begins, and one organ after another is disabled. That, with all his outward

calmness, he must have endured intense anxiety, is obvious ; for, as no one had a more acute and chivalrous sense of honour, or entertained more attachment for his family, he was, no doubt, haunted by continual apprehensions of leaving his engagements unfulfilled. This high and proud sense of integrity was marked in November this year, when, on his retirement from office (which he now felt to be necessary), Earl Grey's government offered him the full salary, instead of the usual portion allotted in such cases. He respectfully acknowledged the intended favour, but would accept of no more than had been allowed to his former colleagues, "over whom he did not feel himself entitled to preference."

In the course of the winter, it became obvious to all his friends, that, although it was impossible to judge how long he might survive, or how much literary toil he might still undergo ; yet, all hopes of his perfect restoration to health must be abandoned. In the year 1819, he had to contend with *disease*, but now he yielded to *decay*. The principles of life were then strong within him, and the light of his mind was unquenchable ; but now the functions of nature were disordered, and his mind almost perpetually clouded. Frequently, in the course of these pages, I have mentioned his unalterable good temper ; but this

was not *natural* to the author of "Waverley," any more than it has been to other men of genius, but an effect of good sense and strong moral discipline. With acute feelings, and forcible conceptions, irritability follows as an inevitable consequence. Now, alas! those acute feelings remained, and the strength to control and govern irritability was lost. His friends justly looked on it as the worst symptom of his disorder, when, instead of appearing always cheerful and contented, he became peevish and morose. Hence, even the reform bill haunted him like a spectre; and he conceived that, if Earl Grey's measures were carried, a revolution, like that of France in 1790, would follow in this country as a matter of course; whereas, in his better days, he certainly would have been the first to express perfect confidence in the powers of the conservative party to avert whatever evils might threaten to rise out of the self-interested machinations of the Whigs.

His last public appearance in Scotland (at a Roxburgh county dinner in March 1831), has been so frequently commemorated, that it is needless to dwell on the subject here. His object in attending, was to enter his most solemn and energetic protest against Lord John Russell's bill; and he concluded an impressive speech in these most affecting words: "I must now take

leave of you, and I shall do so in the well-known words of the Roman gladiator to his emperor, '*Moriturus vos salutat!*'" Notwithstanding his evident illness, and the obviously *heartfelt sincerity* with which he delivered his sentiments, let it be recorded, to the disgrace of human nature, and the infamy of a popular faction, that, during his speech, he was occasionally assailed with hisses. Yet, the extreme lowness of spirits which he shewed after this meeting, certainly need not be ascribed to the impression of having been treated with disrespect by individuals for whose voices (in his own words) he "cared no more than for the braying of the beasts in the field;" but rather to the conviction of his own exhausted powers, which he painfully felt on this occasion, and the consequent reflection, that, as he had now taken leave of public life, he must, ere long, part also from those relations and friends whom he held most dear, and without having accomplished the plans in which they had all been led to confide.

There is hardly any stage of decline or disease under which the constitution may not, for a limited time, rally, so as to afford hope to friends, if not to the patient. From this day onwards, I scarce think that Scott had any hopes of his own recovery; but, as before, in 1819, he struggled nobly, and had lucid intervals (if I may use the

expression), during which he resumed his literary efforts, and wrote or dictated letters to his friends. To his surviving relations it must be consolatory to reflect, that in Dr. Abercromby he had the most skilful, the most ingenious, and kind-hearted of physicians; but at length it became apparent that medical treatment, in this case, could be of no permanent avail. The only chance left, was from an entire change of scene, and a very long journey, the fatigue of which would serve for employment, thus absolutely precluding him from those labours and anxieties which had engendered his malady.

CHAPTER VIII.

RETURN TO LONDON IN OCTOBER 1831 — VOYAGE TO MALTA
 — RESIDENCE IN ITALY — JOURNEY HOMEWARD IN THE
 SUMMER OF 1832 — ARRIVAL AT ABBOTSFORD — HIS DEATH
 AND FUNERAL — FURTHER AND CONCLUDING RECOLLEC-
 TIONS OF HIS BENEVOLENCE AND STEADFAST FRIENDSHIP.

It was not without great reluctance that he acquiesced in this plan; and, at last, he yielded, not on conviction, but on principles of duty, because an invalid is bound to follow the injunctions of his confidential physician. At London, however, in the autumn, he certainly rallied; but it was the mind only that rallied, in like manner as it sometimes triumphs even within the hour of dissolution. Yet his heart was cheered by the kind attentions, the deep respect and sympathy shewn to him from all quarters; and having, in former years, always derived benefit from a sea-voyage, he rejoiced at last in the *mode* of his conveyance abroad; namely, a king's ship, the "Barham," bound for Malta. He did not embark till the very end of October; but, notwithstanding the advanced period of the season, had a pleasant and pro-

sperous voyage, which he bore so well, that, on his first arrival, sanguine hopes were again entertained of his recovery.

These expectations strengthened during the depth of winter, which he spent at Naples; the only place, I believe, where, during his residence on the Continent, he made any attempt to resume his literary employments. Here he not unfrequently tried to write with his own hand; but any specimens I have seen are in a scrawl so wretched, that the character of his autograph, once fluent, firm, and rapid, is entirely lost. At Naples he was watched over, not only by his daughter, but *both* his sons, and received the utmost attention and kindness from the king, and all the *beau monde* of this capital. But the romantic features of nature, the interesting remains of antiquity, and even the most intelligent society (to use for a moment the language of German philosophy), are but outward *phenomena*, of which the interest depends on the mental recipient; and when bodily powers decay, the mind clings rather to the remembrance of early years, than to any enjoyment which novel impressions can excite. The Pompeian ruins alone would formerly have been a source of the greatest amusement and delight to Sir Walter Scott. He would have excavated and explored in this region with the same enthusiasm

with which he once "drained the well" at Dunnotar Castle, and exulted in every mouldering remnant which he brought to light. But *now*, whatever attractions this world could afford him, were *in Italy* faint and feeble; whereas, the ties which connected him with his own country, especially with his favourite Abbotsford, were yet strong, and, while life remained, indissoluble. In the course of the spring his health did not, as was expected, improve. Every means had been adopted to keep his mind *constantly* and *cheerfully* occupied, so that, in the complete absence of anxiety and intellectual pressure, the vital organs might possibly recover their tone. On this principle, when at Rome, in the month of April, he was induced to visit all the scenes and spectacles that usually interest a traveller; but here he became so painfully conscious of his own increasing weakness, that henceforward all efforts devised by friends for his amusement were in vain. Nothing could dispel nor overcome the apprehension, that his strength would altogether wear out before it was possible to reach that home which he had never wished to leave.

The plans formerly recommended by physicians were now, therefore, abandoned. It would have been only injurious and cruel to detain him in a country where this gloomy impression kept his mind always on the rack. But

the route home by land, through Switzerland and down the Rhine, was preferred, in hopes that perpetual change of scene, together with the consciousness that he was every day drawing nearer to England, might yet have a favourable effect. Alas! this consciousness formed the sole interest he now took in his journey, and was accompanied with such impatience to proceed, that he sometimes could hardly be prevailed on to desist from travelling both night and day. Still he retained his mental faculties until that last fatal seizure, which happened on his passage down the Rhine, where the intense heat of summer aggravated his sufferings, and brought on the worst of symptoms, another paralytic stroke, which, at first, it was supposed would prove immediately mortal.

Henceforward the light of intellect was almost entirely obscured, and the remaining three months of his existence were spent in a state far too painful for description. Only at intervals could he recognise his relatives or attendants, or express himself so as to be understood. Under these complicated sufferings he arrived in London, where he remained about ten days at a hotel in Jermyn Street, receiving the utmost attention from his friend, Sir Henry Halford, and other physicians, and affectionately watched by his family. In so far as his wishes could be

ascertained, they remained unchangeably bent *on home*; and he, therefore, embarked on the 7th of July, in a steam-vessel, which, by a rapid and easy voyage, arrived at Edinburgh on the evening of the 9th. Here he rested for two days, at his house in Shandwick Place, scarcely, I believe, recognising where he was; but, on the first view of Abbotsford from the carriage-windows, during his journey thither, it has been told that his excitement was intense, — that he fully recognised the friends around him, and expressed the utmost joy and gratitude because he had once more beheld that home to which he was so fondly attached. But this recognition was like an expiring gleam of the intellectual lamp, which immediately afterwards subsided into the faint glimmer of exhaustion. On his arrival at his own house, it is said that he no longer took any interest in the objects around him, or shewed recollection, except by shaking hands cordially with his old acquaintance and faithful steward, Mr. William Laidlaw. In short, the grasp of death was on him; and the long struggle which followed, was only a faint indication of that innate strength of constitution, which had already borne up under so many trials.

During most of the time, from the 12th July, when he arrived at Abbotsford, till his death,

he remained in a state either of stupefaction or delirium ; a symptom which, I believe, seldom fails to attend the last conflict of an originally robust frame, and strong mind, with *untimely* decay. On the 21st September, he was released from all his sufferings, and on the 26th took place his funeral ; on which day, as it is remarked by a contemporary journalist, all nature was wrapped in the deepest gloom of a lowering autumnal sky, as if even the elements mourned the extinction of a light such as on earth may not appear again for centuries. His remains were interred in the evening at Dryburgh Abbey, where, as yet, no monument is erected to his memory. Nor is this to be wondered at. By his varied works, and his untarnished fame, he has himself created the most imperishable of monuments ; and by no efforts of the most highly gifted sculptor, could the affection of surviving friends be expressed. Such works of art would have seemed rather an ostentatious mockery of their attachment and affliction. On similar principles, his immediate relatives have deserted Abbotsford, the sight of which only adds poignancy to feelings which, even after the lapse of years, are almost too acute for endurance. It may be from a morbid impression, but, instead of wishing to visit Abbotsford, I would, if travelling in the neighbourhood, rather

take a circuitous route to avoid it. With all its natural and artificial beauty, with its now well-grown and flourishing woods, it presents, to the eyes of a friend, only the sad memorial of happiness which *has been*, and which no earthly power can restore.

To this brief memoir it may possibly be objected that I have set down nothing but praise ; but, on the part of all those who speak from personal knowledge of its subject, I shall be acquitted, at least, of having written under the influence of any prejudice. Mere truth has been commemorated, without the slightest colouring from imagination. That those who were honoured with his friendship might be wholly blinded to faults or failings, is, indeed, a natural result where good so decisively preponderated in the balance. And that his friends should be *firmly* attached, was the unavoidable effect of a direct and obvious cause ; namely, that for *firmness* and consistency of character (the rarest of human virtues), Scott might invariably be relied on. In all emergencies of life, where sterling integrity, honour, self-possession, command of temper, and—though last, not least — *benevolence*, were required, I could *predict* with certainty in what manner he would act, and almost anticipate the very language he would use. I needed not to fear, as *in other cases*, that the lapse of a year, a month, or,

perhaps, a day, might possibly have made an entire change in his views or disposition. Never was he known to adopt the ordinary principles of the world, and desert a friend in adversity: even by errors and misconduct—whilst he always expressed his disapprobation and tendered his advice—yet he was *not readily to be alienated*. Of this I remember several instances with regard to persons who, by waywardness and imprudence, had given him ample cause for provocation and anger.

It is said that no commodity is so cheap as advice; but I suspect, that good advice, given in such manner as to effect any real benefit, is a “commodity” of very rare occurrence. Of all counsellors on occasions of perplexity that I have known, Sir Walter Scott was infinitely the best; nor, when obstinately fixed in his own opinion, did he assume a harsh and dictatorial tone. He never took up a *one-sided* view of the subject, but saw it, as if intuitively, in all its bearings; then, if he had made up his mind, and entertained any real interest in behalf of the person so counselled, he was not, like the once notable General Trappaud, satisfied with announcing what *ought to be done*, but exerted himself to bring his own suggestions into execution. I shall never cease to remember how earnestly, in 1825, he deprecated certain plans

which were then of some consequence, though, to himself individually, of no moment. He had given his advice, and he perceived plainly enough that it would not be followed. I was at the threshold of the outer door of his house in town (on my departure), when he called to me from the upper floor, and came down-stairs. "Before you walk home," said he, "I wish to impress on your mind once more my perfect sincerity in the offers I have made to-day. Do not abandon a friend's counsels without due reflection; for, be assured, I have not advised without having myself carefully reflected. Your plans involve great trouble, and great risk; those which I recommend are not attended with any. Yours may, indeed *must*, succeed to a certain extent; but, to reach the goal, would require sustained efforts, of which no mortal, under adverse circumstances, can rationally be supposed capable. If you proceed, time will be thrown away, property sacrificed, character attacked, if not injured; and, after a vain and most fatiguing struggle, you will end in a situation far worse than when you began." A witness to the conversation observed, that it was an extraordinary instance of disinterested zeal; but, that any one should be insane enough to reject the proffers so kindly made, or the advice so forcibly given, was yet more extraordinary. As

to the verification of his predictions, this may be understood as a matter of course.

By some detractors it has been occasionally alleged, that Scott, through life, enjoyed advantages such as rarely fall to the lot of men devoted to literature; on which grounds they would infer, that his eminence is less to be wondered at. It is true that, from the beginning, he was independent; he might *talk* of the *res angusta domi* in early years, but could never experience the horror of that thralldom entailed by poverty, when the labour of each day is required to provide for existing wants. If, however, in a state of perfect independence, he submitted to long and arduous literary tasks, without any necessity for so doing; surely his merit is not thereby lessened, but enhanced. Such cavillers, perhaps, wish to insinuate that, if doomed to write for daily bread, his genius would not have triumphed; and, in truth, could any obstacle have broken the *practically* calm, but *originally* irritable spirit of Sir Walter, it would have been poverty. Yet, as there is no state of prosperity to which we cannot naturally enough suggest a contrast, I could imagine his unyielding and stern self-control — even playfulness and mildness — over a cup of water and crust of bread; or his expression, “It is my lot in this world; and, if not quite content, I endeavour

to be so." He would, *even then*, have maintained the same principles of independence by which he was actuated through life; and the perfect tranquillity and fortitude with which he "looked difficulties in the face," would have disarmed them of their terrors.

In this, as in many other passages, I have wished to illustrate the moral character of Sir Walter Scott, in which respect he was even more worthy of admiration than for his literary excellence. Hence no man of genius was ever so universally regretted, or left behind him a reputation so completely without a blot.

THE END.

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